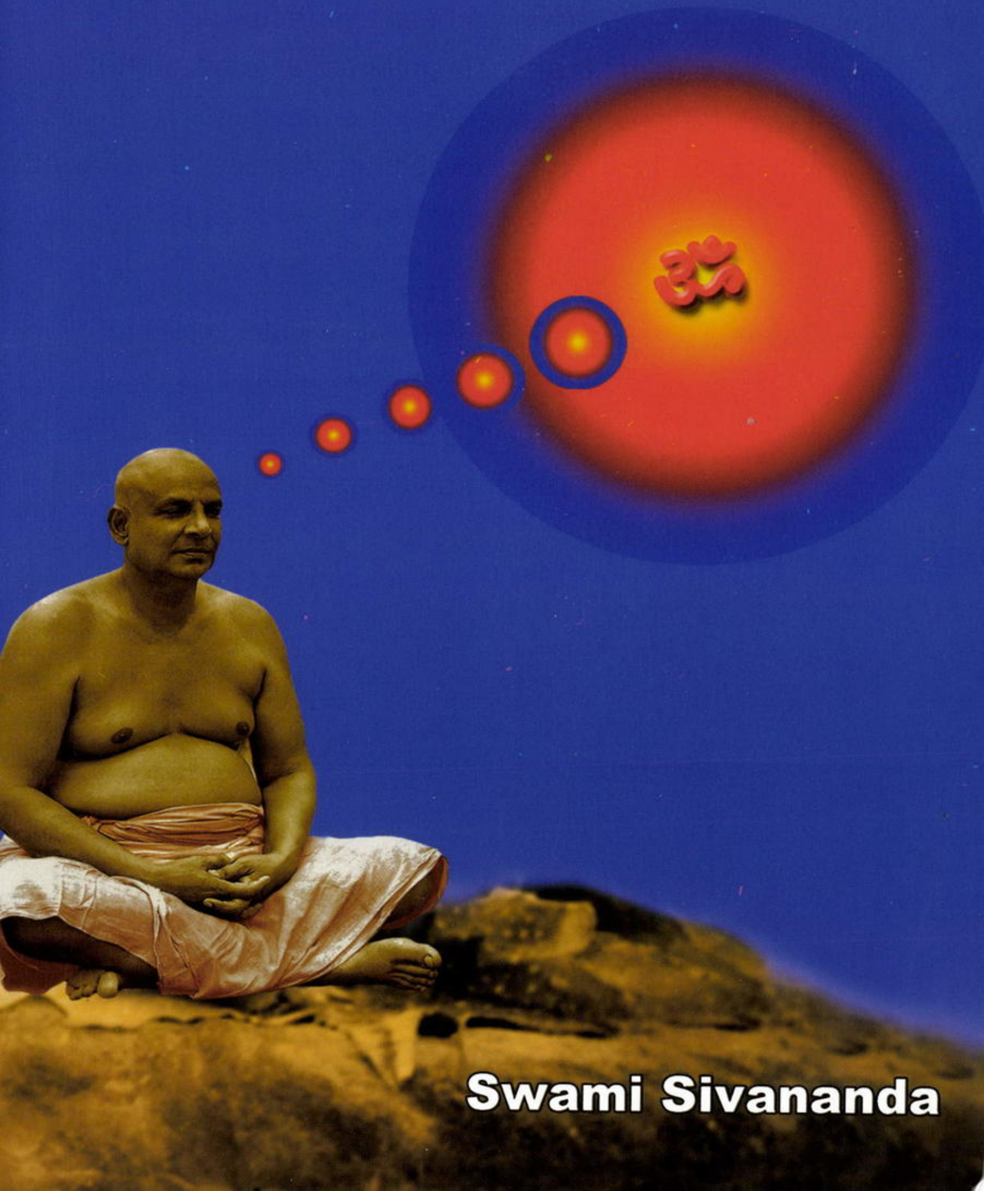
MEDITATION
KNOW-HOW



Swami Sivananda

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Sri Swami Sivananda

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SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all and an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career; and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earlier been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta.

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948 the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was organised. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950 Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swamiji convened a 'World Parliament of Religions'. Swamiji is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji's works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

CONTENTS

Introduction 8
1. Focussing of Consiciousness 17
2. Concentration 24
3. Tratak or Steady Gazing 34
4. Where to Concentrate 40
5. How to Develop Concentration 47
6. What is Meditation? 54
7. No Meditation, No Realisation 69
8. Prerequisites for Meditation. 75
9. Step by Step on the Yoga Ladder 79
10. Places favourable for Meditation 87
11. Samskara Raksha—
Protection of Spiritual Impressions 97
12. The Meditation Room and the Meditation Hours. 102
13. The Meditative Postures 109
14. Yogic Diet 114
15. Key Guidelines to Successful Meditation. 121
16. On Choosing an Object for Meditation 128
17. Meditation Exercises 131
18. Saguna Meditation and
Nirguna Meditation Compared 143
19. One Guru, One Place, One Yoga 147
20. The Most Common Obstacles to Meditation . . . 153
21. Vikshepa or Tossing of the Mind 168
22. The Problem of Evil Thoughts 174

23. Substratum Awakenings in the Mind 178
24. Social Factors that Impede Meditation 183
25. Evil Qualities that Hinder Meditation. 189
26. Other Undesirable Traits 195
27. States of Mind that Stall Progress. 207
28. Meditation, Work and Rest 213
29. The Appearance of Lights in Meditaion 217
30. Visions in Meditation 221
31. Separating from the Body. 227
32. What Happens in Meditation 233
33. Siddhis 245
34. Samadhi 251
35. Spiritual Vibrations and Aura 259

INTRODUCTION

O my dear aspirants! I send you the thought-currents of peace from the peaceful atmosphere of the sacred Himalayas, the abode of Rishis.

The goal of life is the attainment of final beatitude or Moksha. Moksha can be attained by constant meditation.

Reality or Brahman can be realised by man. Many have attained Self-realisation. Many have enjoyed the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Sankara, Dattatreya, Mansoor, Shams Tabriez, Jesus, Buddha were all realised souls who had direct perception of the Truth.

The Ultimate Truth or Brahman or the Absolute can be experienced by all persons by regular practice of meditation with a pure heart. Mere abstract reasoning and study of books will not do. What is wanted is direct experience. The direct experience is the source for higher intuitional knowledge or divine wisdom. This experience is superconscious or transcendental. There is neither the play of the senses nor the intellect here. This is not an emotional experience. The senses, mind and intellect are at perfect rest. They do not function a bit. This experience is not an imaginary experience of a visionary dreamer. It is not a reverie. It is not a hypnotic trance. It is solid living Truth like the Amalaka fruit on the palm of your hand. The third eye or the eye of wisdom is opened in the experiencer. The extraordinary experience comes from cognition through the spiritual eye or the eye of intuition. This eye of wisdom can be opened when the senses, mind and intellect cease functioning.

Samadhi or blissful divine experience arises when the ego and the mind are dissolved. It is a state to be attained by one's own effort. It is limitless, divisionless and infinite, an experience of being and of pure consciousness. When this experience is realised, the mind, desires, actions, and feelings of joy and sorrow vanish into a void.

He who has controlled his mind is really happy and free. Physical freedom is no freedom at all. If you are easily carried away by surging emotions and impulses, if you are under the grip of moods, cravings and passions, how can you be really happy, O sweet beloved child! You are like a rudderless boat. You are tossed about hither and thither like a piece of straw in the vast expanse on the ocean. You laugh for five minutes and weep for five hours. What can wife, son, friends, money, fame and power do for you when you are under the sway of the impulses of your own mind? He is the true hero who has controlled his mind. There is an adage: "He who has controlled his mind has controlled the world." True victory is over the mind. That is real freedom. Thorough rigorous discipline and self-imposed restrictions will eventually eradicate all desires, thoughts, impulses, cravings and passions. Only then, and not until then, can you expect to be free from the thralldom of the mind. You should not give any leniency to the mind. The mind is mischievous imp. Curb it by drastic measures. Become a perfect Yogi. Money cannot give you freedom. Freedom is not a commodity that can be purchased in the Crawford Market. It is a rare, hidden treasure guarded by a five-hooded serpent. Unless you kill or tame this serpent, you cannot have access to that treasure. That treasure is Spiritual Wealth, that is Freedom, that is Bliss. The serpent is your mind. The five hoods are the five senses through which the mind-serpent hisses.

People are immersed in worldliness. They madly run after money and women. They have no time to think of God and higher spiritual things. The sun dawns and the mind runs again in its old, usual, sensual grooves of eating, drinking, amusing and sleeping. The day has passed. In this way the whole life passes away. There is neither moral development nor spiritual progress.

Really, there is no pleasure in objects. Atma gives a push to the mind and sets it in motion. A Vritti or thought-wave arises in the mind on account of the force of a Vasana or latent subtle desire. The mind is agitated and runs towards the particular object. The agitation will not subside till the mind gets the desired object. It will constantly think of the object. It will scheme and plan various methods to achieve the desired object. It will be ever restless. It will be ever assuming the shape of the object. As soon as the object is obtained and enjoyed, the particular Vritti that was causing agitation in the mind gets dissolved. Vritti-laya takes place. When Vritti-laya takes place, you get peace and Ananda from the Svarupa or Atma within only and not from the object outside. Ignorant persons attribute their pleasures to external objects. That is a serious blunder indeed.

There is no happiness at all in any of the objects of the world. It is sheer ignorance to think that we derive any pleasure from the sense-objects or from the mind. Whenever we feel our desires are satisfied, we observe that the mind moves towards the heart, towards Atma. In pleasure also, there is exercise of the mind. It expands. It turns inward and moves to its original home, the place of its origin, Atma and enjoys Atma-sukh, the bliss of the Self.

Why do you search in vain, for your happiness, O worldly fools, outside, in objects, money, women, titles, honours, name and fame, which are false, worthless and like cowdung? You cannot get your happiness there. You are entirely deluded. Search within the heart, subjectively in the Atma, the source and fountain of all happiness.

Real happiness is within you. It is in the Atma. It is subjective. It is in the Sattva Guna and beyond Sattva. It manifests when the mind is concentrated. When the Indriyas are withdrawn from the objects outside, when the mind is one-pointed, when there is Vasana-kshaya or annihilation of the Vasanas, when there is Manonasa or annihilation of the mind, when you become desireless and thoughtless, Atmic bliss begins to dawn; spiritual Ananda begins to thrill.

Be silent. Enter silence. Silence is Atma. Silence is Brahman. Silence is Centre. Silence is the Hridaya Guha, the heart-cave. When the mind runs from one object to another, that state in the interval wherein you become mindless for a very short time is Svarupasthiti. That is Brahman. When the mind is controlled fully, Vrittis cease. When all the modifications subside, you enter into the silence then and then alone. Realise this, this very moment. Feel the divine glory and Brahmic splendour now by closing the eyes, by drawing the Indriyas, by stilling the mind, by silencing the thoughts, by sharpening the intellect, by purifying the Chitta, by meditating on OM, by chanting OM with Bhava, with feeling. Keep up the continuity of Brahmic consciousness throughout the 24 hours. Have an unceasing flow of Atmic consciousness. This is very, very important. This is a *sine qua non.* This is a great desideratum.

O Prem! There is a place where you will neither hear any sound nor see any colour. That place is Param Dhama or Padam Anaamaya, painless seat. It is the realm of peace and bliss. There is no body-consciousness here. Here mind finds rest. All desires and cravings melt away. The Indriyas remain quiet here. The intellect ceases functioning. There is neither fight nor quarrel here. Will you not seek this silent abode through silent meditation? Solemn stillness reigns supreme here. Rishis of yore attained this place only by melting the mind in the silence. Brahman shines here in native effulgence.

Forget the body. Forget the surroundings. Forgetting is the highest Sadhana. It helps meditation a great deal. It makes the approach to God easier. By remembering God, you can forget all these things.

Sit at ease. Close your eyes. Look within. Withdraw the rays of the mind. Silence the thoughts. Meditate on Atma or the Absolute. Chant OM. Sing OM. Feel OM. Mentally repeat OM. The mind will move now to its Centre or Source slowly. You will forget the body and the world. The breathing will become very slow. The breath will move within the nostrils. Your heart will be flooded with joy and bliss. Divine nectar will trickle down. Drink it to your heart's content and attain immortality. Divine peace, eternal tranquillity will roll over your head, wave after wave. Plunge deep in the ocean of peace. Swim freely and rejoice. What a magnanimous, happy state! What blissful freedom!! What wonderful perfection and independence!!!

Dear brothers! Children of Immortality! Plod on. Push on. Do not look backward. Forget the past. Forget the body and the world. But forget not the Centre. Forget not the Source. A glorious brilliant future is awaiting you. Purify. Serve. Love. Give. Live in OM. Feel always and everywhere the indwelling, all-pervading Presence. Realise the Self. Rest in the magnanimous Ocean of Peace, in the stupendous Sea of Stillness. Drink the nectar of immortality. May the Indwelling Presence be your centre, ideal and goal. May joy, bliss, immortality, peace, glory and splendour abide with you for ever.

Nectar's sons! In this book I have placed before you in detail not only the step-by-step approach to meditation and the mechanics of its practice, but also all the obstacles that stand in the way of meditation and God-realisation. I have then proceeded to suggest various effective methods to remove those obstacles. Stand up now like an undaunted spiritual soldier in the Adhyatmic battle-field. Become a spiritual hero of great intrepidity and unique chivalry. Get over the obstacles fearlessly one by one and manifest divine glory, splendour, purity and sanctity. Wait patiently with a calm and serene mind for results. Do not be hasty, rash and impetuous. Allow proper time for regeneration and renovation. *Nil desperandum.* Never despair. Wear the Vairagya coat-of-arms. Wield the shield of Viveka. Hold the banner of faith. March boldly and cheerfully with the band of *Bhum Bhum, Bhum, Om Om Om, Ram Ram Ram, Shyam Shyam Shyam.* Stop not till you drink the elixir of immortality to your heart's content. Stop not, dear Sadhaks, till you enter the immortal realm of eternal sunshine, undecaying beauty, unfading ecstasy, supreme bliss, infinite joy, unalloyed felicity and unbroken peace. This is your final destination. You can take eternal rest now. This is your goal. This is your highest aim and purpose of life. Rest now in everlasting peace, friends! Good-bye unto you all. Cheer yourselves. Share this rare panacea with your brothers. Elevate them. This noble and stupendous selfless work is awaiting you now in the grand plan. Fulfill the Divine will and become a Buddha of undying fame. Salutations unto you all!

When a bee finds that its feet are stuck in the honey, it slowly licks its feet several times and then flies away with joy. Even so, extricate yourself from the mind's sticking and clinging to this body and children through Vairagya and meditation. Fly away with joy from this cage of flesh and bones to the Source, Brahman or the Absolute.

Meditate. Purify your mind. Practise concentration in a solitary room. Then squeeze out the Upanishads and the Gita from your heart. Don't depend upon imperfect commentaries. If you are sincere, you will understand the real Sankalpa, the real thoughts of the Rishis of the Upanishads and Lord Krishna, what they really meant when they uttered those wise Slokas in the scriptures.

Unfold the Divinity that is lurking in your heart by concentration and meditation. Don't waste your time. Don't waste your life. Meditate. Meditate. Don't lose even a single minute. Meditation will remove all the miseries of life. That is the only way. Meditation is the enemy of the mind. It brings about Manonasa or the annihilation of the mind.

When you reach the spiritual summit of thoughtlessness, you will reach the abode of immortality and eternal peace and supreme bliss. O Ram! Start your homeward journey. March boldly in the spiritual path. Be not afraid of difficulties. Be bold. Ascend peak after peak. Cross the deep ravines of subtle Moha and pride that come on your way. Take a long jump and cross the mystic frontier of Avyaktam. Chop off the thoughts that wage again and again a guerilla war. Enter now the infinite domain of pure bliss and highest knowledge. Regain your old pristine divine glory. Rest in your Satchidananda Svarup.

No more words. Enough of discussions and heated debates. Retire into a solitary room. Close your eyes. Have deep silent meditation. Feel His presence. Repeat His Name OM with fervour, joy and love. Fill your heart with Prem. Destroy the Sankalpas, thoughts, whims, fancies and desires when they arise from the surface of the mind. Withdraw the wandering mind and fix it on the Lord. Now Nishta, meditation, will become deep and intense. Don't open your eyes. Don't stir from your seat. Merge in Him. Dive deep into the innermost recesses of the heart. Plunge into the shining Soul within. Drink the nectar of immortality. Enjoy the silence now. I shall leave you there alone. Nectar's sons! Rejoice, rejoice,! Peace, peace! Silence, silence! Glory, glory!

MEDITATION KNOW-HOW

1

FOCUSSING OF CONSCIOUSNESS

When you climb a mountain or get down a steep descent, you will have to be very careful. Otherwise you will have a slip and you will fall into the deep abyss below. When you ride a bicycle, if you talk to your friends on the road, a motor car will dash against you from behind. If you are a bit absent-minded when you walk on the road, you will strike against a stone and fall down. A careless barber will cut the nose of his customer. A careless washerman will burn the clothes of his master. A sleepy aspirant will dash his head against the wall or fall down prostrate on the ground. Therefore, you must develop attention. Attention leads to concentration.

Attention is steady application of the mind. It is focussing of consciousness on some chosen object. Through attention you can develop your mental faculties and capacities. Where there is attention, there is also concentration. Attention should be cultivated gradually. It is not a special process. It is the whole mental process in one of its aspects.

If you analyse carefully the mental functions or operations, no one process can be singled out and called attention. It is not possible to separate attention as a distinct function. You observe something; therefore, you are attentive.

Perception always involves attention. To perceive is to attend. Through attention you get a clear and distinct knowledge of objects. The entire energy is focussed on the object towards which attention is directed. Full and complete information is gained. During attention, all the dissipated rays of the mind are collected. There is effort or struggle in attention. Through attention a deeper impression of anything is made in the mind. If you have good attention, you can attend to the matter in hand exclusively. An attentive man has very good memory. He is very vigilant and circumspect. He is nimble and alert.

Attention or Avadhana plays a conspicuous part in concentration. Attention is the basis of will. It is one of the signs of a trained will. It is found in men of strong mentality. It is a rare faculty. Brahmacharya wonderfully develops this power. A Yogi who possesses this faculty can fix the mind even on an unpleasant object for a very long time. Attention can be cultivated and developed by persistent practice. All who have achieved greatness have risen up through this faculty.

One Thing at a Time

The human mind has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with a marvellous degree of speed, so rapidly in fact that some have held that it could grasp several things at a time. But the best authorities, eastern and western, hold to the "single idea" theory as being correct. It agrees with one's daily experience also.

You cannot attend to two different objects at a time. Mind can do only one thing at a time. Because it moves with such a tremendous velocity backwards and forwards, you think that the mind can attend to several objects or things at a time. You can only see or hear at a time. You cannot see and hear at the same time. But this law is not applicable to a developed Yogi. A developed Yogi can do several things at a time, because his will is not separate from the Cosmic Will which is all-powerful. There are Yogis who can do eight or ten or even hundred things at a time. This is not strange. The whole secret lies in the fact that they have developed their attention to a remarkable degree.

Kinds of Attention

Attention is of two kinds, viz., external attention and internal attention. When the attention is directed towards external objects, it is called external attention. When it is directed internally within the mind upon mental objects and ideas, it is known as internal attention.

There are again two other kinds of attention, viz., voluntary attention and involuntary attention. When the attention is directed towards some external object by an effort of the will, it is called voluntary attention. When you have an express volition to attend to this or that, it is called voluntary attention. The man understands why he perceives. Some deliberate intention, incentive, goal or purpose is definitely involved. Voluntary attention needs effort, will, determination and some mental training. This is cultivated by practice and perseverance. The benefits derived by the practice of attention are incalculable. Involuntary attention is quite common. This does not demand any practice. There is no effort of the will. The attention is induced by the beauty and attractive nature of the object. Individuals perceive without knowing why and without observed instruction. Young children possess this power of involuntary attention to a greater degree than grown-up people.

Interest and Attention

If a man is not observant, he is not attentive. If he observes something, he is said to be attentive. Intention, purpose, hope, expectation, desire, belief, wish, knowledge, aim, goal and needs serve to determine attention. You will have to note carefully the degree, duration, range, forms, fluctuations and conflicts of attention.

If you closely watch, you will note that you observe different objects at different times. This perception of now one object and now another, when the physical conditions are constant, is known as fluctuation of attention. Attention changes. The objects themselves change or fluctuate, but there is no fluctuation in the observing individual himself. The mind has not been trained to bear prolonged attention. It gets disgusted through monotony and wants to run towards some other pleasing object. You may say, "I am going to attend to one thing only", but you will soon find that even though you attempt very hard, you suddenly perceive something else. The attention wavers.

There is great attention if the object is very pleasing. You will have to create interest. Then there will be attention. If the attention gets diminished, change your attention to another pleasant object. By patient training you can direct the mind to attend to an unpleasant object also by creating interest. Then your will will grow strong.

Interest develops attention. It is difficult to fix the mind on an uninteresting object. When a professor is lecturing, when the subject is abstract and metaphysical, many people leave the hall quietly because they cannot attend to a subject which is not interesting. But if the same professor sings and tells some interesting and thrilling stories, all people hear him with rapt attention. There is pin drop silence. Lecturers should know the art of attracting the mind of hearers. They will have to change the tone to talk with force and emphasis. They will have to watch the audience and see whether they are attentive or not. They will have to change the subject matter for a short while and bring in some nice stories and suitable illustrations. They will have to look at the hearers directly in their eyes. So many things are necessary if one wants to become a successful lecturer, if one wants to make the hearers attentive.

By constant practice and ever-renewed effort of attention, a subject that in the beginning was dry and uninteresting may become full of interest when you master it and learn its meaning and its issues. The power of concentrating your attention on the subject may become stronger.

Throw your entire attention into whatever you happen to be doing at the moment. Practise attention on those unpleasant tasks from which you have been shrinking before on account of their unpleasantness. Throw interest upon uninteresting objects and ideas. Hold them on before your mind. Interest will slowly manifest. Many mental weaknesses will vanish. The mind will become stronger and stronger.

Napoleon and Newton

Napoleon, Gladstone, Arjuna and Jnanadeva all had wonderful power of attention. They could fix their mind on any object. All scientists and occultists possess attention to a remarkable degree. They cultivate it by patient, regular and systematic practice. A judge and a surgeon can get positive success in their respective professions only if they are endowed with the power of attention to a high degree.

When you do any work, plunge yourself in it. Forget yourself. Lose the self. Concentrate upon the work. Shut out all other thoughts. When you do one thing, do not think of any other thing. When you study one book, do not think of any other book. Fix the mind there steadily like the arrow-maker who had no consciousness of his surroundings.

There was a workman who used to manufacture arrows. Once he was very busy at his work. He was so much absorbed in his work that he did not notice even a big party of a Raja with his retinue passing in front of his shop. Such must be the nature of your concentration.

Eminent scientists are so busy and attentive in their experiments and researches in their laboratories that they forget to take food even for days together. Once some gentleman invited Sir Isaac Newton for dinner. Newton repaired to his host's bungalow and took his seat in the drawing room. The gentleman forgot all about Newton, took his dinner and retired to bed. Newton was musing within himself very absorbedly on some important point of science. He did not stir from his seat. He forgot all about his dinner and remained in the same chair like a statue for a long time. The next morning the host saw Newton in the drawing room and then only remembered his having invited the latter for dinner. He felt sorry for his forgetfulness and apologised to Sir Isaac in a meek voice. What a wonderful power of attention Sir Isaac Newton had! All geniuses possess this power to an infinite degree.

Attention belongs to every state of consciousness and is present in every field of consciousness. An attentive student in the spiritual path can do hearing or Sravana of the Srutis in an efficient manner. The military officer says 'Attention!' and the soldier is ready with the gun to carry out his behests. An attentive soldier alone can hit the mark. No one can get success either in temporal or spiritual pursuits without attention.

When a great misfortune has befallen you or when you pass in review a certain course of conduct in order to find out the cause of failure, it may take possession of your mind to such a degree that no effort of the will can make you cease from thinking over it. An article has to be written, a book is in the process of preparation—the work is carried on even if there is loss of sleep and you are unable to tear yourself away from it. The attention which began voluntarily has taken entire hold of the field of consciousness.

The force wherewith anything strikes the mind is generally in proportion to the degree of attention bestowed upon it. If you possess a strong power of attention, anything that the mind receives will be deeply impressed. An attentive man only can develop his will. A mixture of attention, application and interest can work wonders. There is no doubt of this. A man of ordinary intellect with highly developed attention can turn out more work than a highly intellectual man who has poor attention. Failure in anything is mainly due to lack of attention. If you attend to one thing at a time, you will get a profound knowledge of that subject in its various aspects. The ordinary untrained man of the world generally attends to several things at a time. He allows many things to enter the gates of his mental factory. That is the reason why he has a clouded or turbid mind. There is no clarity of thought. He cannot do the process of analysis and synthesis. He is bewildered. He cannot express his ideas clearly. Whereas, the disciplined man can attend to a subject exclusively as long as he likes. He extracts full and detailed information about one subject or object and then takes up another. Attention is an important faculty of a Yogi.

2

CONCENTRATION

In all man's struggles and attempts at achieving any desired end, there is in reality no necessity at all for him to go in quest of external forces to aid him. Man contains within himself vast resources, inherent power, lying untapped or else only partially made use of. It is because he has allowed his faculties to get scattered on a hundred different things that he fails to achieve anything great despite his inherent potentialities. If he intelligently regulates and applies them, quick and concrete results will accrue.

To learn to rationally and effectively use the existing forces, man need not wait for any striking new method to be invented to guide him. Since the dawn of creation, nature herself abounds in instructive examples and lessons to aid man in every walk of his life. Observation will tell us that every force in nature, when allowed to flow loosely over a wide area, moves slowly and with comparatively less power than it would do if gathered together in one mass and directed through a single restricted outlet. For example, see how the sluggish and leisurely flow of a river, dammed and accumulated, rushes out with an amazing force through the sluices.

If you focus the rays of the sun through a lens, they can burn cotton or a piece of paper; but the scattered rays cannot do this act. If you want to talk to a man at a distance, you make a funnel of your hand and speak. The sound waves are collected at one point and then directed towards the man. He can hear your speech very clearly. The water is converted into steam and the steam is concentrated at a point. The railway engine moves.

All these are instances of concentrated waves. Even so, if you collect the dissipated rays of the mind and focus them at a point, you will have wonderful concentration. The concentrated mind will serve as a potent searchlight to find out the treasures of the soul and attain the supreme wealth of Atman, eternal bliss, immortality and perennial joy.

This gathering together of the scattered rays of the mind and bringing this force to bear upon a given point—any object, idea or action—forms the process of concentration.

The powers of the mind are always scattered and resist attempts at concentration. This oscillatory tendency is an innate characteristic of the mind-stuff. Of the various methods employed to curtail and arrest this tossing of the mind, those using the media of sound and sight stand prominent, because these two have a peculiar knack of catching the attention of the mind and stilling it. It is seen how a hypnotist gently subdues the mind of the subject by making the latter gaze steadily into his eyes and listen to the monotonous repetition of his steady, deliberate suggestions. We have still another clue to this when we note how the mother gently croons the little child into slumber. Also the schoolmaster's sharp "Now then, boys, look here! whenever he desires them to pay special attention to what he is saying, is significant. He feels that by getting them to fix their gaze on him, he will draw the attention of their mind as well to his teaching.

Therefore, in the course of spiritual discipline too, the methods of developing concentration take the form of gazing steadily at a dot or at the symbol of the Pranava or the Mantra or the figure of the favourite chosen deity. With some others it is done by the audible repetition of the Mantra or the Lord's Name or OM or some select Kirtan tunes with regular rhythm and intonation. By these means the mind gradually gets indrawn and focussed.

Concentration in Yoga Philosophy

Concentration is called Dharana in Yoga philosophy. It is the narrowing of the field of attention. It is fixing the mind on one point. *"Desabandhas Chittasya Dharana.* Concentration is holding the mind to one form or object steadily for a long time." (Yoga Sutras, III-l) Concentration is collectiveness of thought. It is said to be the placing, settling of mind and mental properties, fittingly and well, on a single object. That state, by the strength of which the mind and the mental properties are placed in one object fittingly and well, without wavering, without scattering, should be known as concentration.

Concentration is centring the mind on one single thought. During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. The mind is centred on the Lakshya. There will be no tossing of the mind. One idea occupies the mind. The whole mental energy is concentrated on that one idea. The senses become still. They do not function.

The characteristic of concentration is not-wandering. Its essence is to destroy wavering. Its manifestation is not-shaking. The mind of the happy man is concentrated. Happiness or ease is its proximate cause. Concentration is accompanied by ease, even-mindedness and raptures.

Dharana is the sixth stage or limb of the Ashtanga Yoga or Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi. In Dharana you will have only one Vritti or wave in the mind-lake. The mind assumes the form of only one object. All other operations of the mind are suspended or stopped. He who can practise real concentration for half an hour or one hour will have tremendous psychic powers. His will also will be very powerful.

Kshipta, Mudha, Vikshipta, Ekagra and Niruddha are the five Yogic Bhumikas or stages of the mind. The Chitta or mind manifests itself in five different forms. In the Kshipta state, the rays of the mind are scattered on various objects. The mind is restless and jumps from one object to another. In the Mudha state, the mind is dull and forgetful. Vikshipta is the gathering mind. It is occasionally steady and at other times distracted. By practice of concentration, the mind struggles to gather itself. In the Ekagra state, it is one-pointed. There is only one idea present in the mind. The mind is under perfect control in the Niruddha state. Dharana is practised for stopping the modifications of the mind. By gradual and well-regulated practice of concentration daily, the rays of the wandering mind are collected. The mind becomes one-pointed. Eventually it is curbed properly. It comes under proper control.

It is very difficult to fix the mind all at once on a point. The mind moves with tremendous velocity. Just as the horse in a circus runs in a circle again and again, so also, the mind runs in a circle again and again. Instead of allowing the mind to run in a big circle, make it run in smaller and smaller circles. Eventually it can be fixed on a point. You will have to catch hold of the mind through intelligent methods. Mere coercion and force will not do. It will make matters worse.

Some western psychologists say: "The mind that wanders aimlessly can be made to move in a small limited circle only by the practice of concentration. It cannot be fixed on one point only. If it is fixed on one point only, then inhibition of the mind will take place. There is death for the mind. Nothing can be achieved when there is perfect inhibition of the mind. So there is no use in inhibiting the mind". This is not correct. Complete control of the mind can be attained when all the thought waves are extirpated thoroughly. The Yogi works wonders with the help of his one-pointed mind. He knows the hidden treasures of the soul with the help of the mighty searchlight generated by the one-pointed mind. After Ekagrata or one-pointedness is attained, one has to achieve full restraint or Nirodha. In this state, all modifications subside completely. The mind becomes blank. Then the Yogi destroys this blank Vritti also by identifying himself with the Supreme Purusha or Soul or Being from whom the mind borrows its light. Then he obtains omniscience and attains Kaivalya or independence. These are matters unknown to our western psychologists. Hence they grope in darkness. They have no idea of the Purusha who witnesses the activities of the mind.

Concentration on a Chair

When the thought runs in one definite groove continuously on one subject alone, then it is concentration. The aspirant should withdraw his mind whenever it runs outside and put it in the same groove in the same line of thought on one subject and on one idea.

Mind generally wanders wildly at random. When it thinks of one object, in a second it leaves that object and runs to another object like a monkey, then to a third object and so on. It cannot stick to one point.

The vital point in concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object again and again by limiting its movements in a small circle in the beginning. That is the main aim. A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone. This is the fruit of your constant and protracted Sadhana. The joy is indescribable now.

When you meditate on a chair, for instance, bring all thoughts connected with the chair and dwell on those ideas. Do not allow any other thought connected with another object to enter the mind. There should be one line of thought. There should be one continuity of thought. There may be several ideas connected with one subject. That does not matter.

Concentration on a chair really means getting a full, detailed knowledge of the chair, its different parts, the particular wood out of which it is manufactured such as Devadaru and rosewood, its workmanship, its durability, its cost price, the degree of comfort it gives to the back and arms, whether the parts can be detached and fixed again, whether it is manufactured on modern lines and made bug-proof, what sort of polish or varnish is used to make it durable, and so on. When you concentrate on a chair, ideas of this sort occupy your mind.

Do not allow any other thought of any other object. Again and again bring the mind that wanders to the object, which is chair. When you meditate on a rose, think of rose and rose alone. When you think of a book, think of all that is connected with the book and nothing outside of it. When you think of a radio or a talkie, think of the radio or talkie alone. Exhaust all matters connected with the subject on hand. You can take any subject that is pleasing to the mind. Slowly you can take up any subject that is displeasing to the mind by creating interest in it again and again. You should always remember the maxim: "One thing at a time and that done well is a very good rule as many can tell". When you take up any work, apply your whole heart, full mind and soul, to the work. Do it with perfect concentration. What another can do in six hours you can turn out within half an hour, smoothly, in a methodical and orderly manner. This is Yogic activity. You will be taken for an accomplished Yogi. Even when you study, study the subject with perfect concentration. Do not allow the mind to wander. You must shut out all external sounds. Fix the gaze on one point. Do not allow the eyes to wander. When you study a subject do not think of coffee or sweetmeats or your friend. The whole world must be dead to you for the time being. Such must be the nature of your concentration.

Concentration—A Success Key

Concentration is required not only in the spiritual path, but also in every walk of life. A man without concentration is a failure in life.

Every little act demands concentration and your whole-hearted attention. If you want to pass a thread through the eye of a needle, you must remove all the fibres that are disjointed. Then you must make it into a single fibre and with great care and one-pointed thought pass the thread into the needle.

Fix your mind on the work on hand. Give your complete heart and soul to it. Let it be even a small work like peeling off the skin of a plantain fruit or squeezing a lemon. Never do anything haphazardly. Never take your meals in haste. Be calm and patient in all your actions. Never arrive at hasty conclusions. Never do a thing in haste. No work can be done successfully without calmness and concentration. Those who have attained success and become great have all possessed this indispensable virtue.

You will be successful in every attempt. You will never meet with failure if you can do your work with perfect attention and concentration. When you sit for prayers and meditation, never think of your office work. When you work in the office, never think of the child who is sick or any other household work. When you take bath, do not think of games. When you sit for meals, do not think of the work that is pending in the office. You must train yourself to attend to the work on hand with perfect one-pointedness. You can easily develop your will-power and memory. You will become a mighty man. Concentration is the master-key to open the gates of victory.

Those who practise concentration evolve quickly. They can do any work with scientific accuracy and great efficiency. What others do in six hours can be done by one who has concentration within half an hour. What others can read in six hours can be read by one who has concentration within half an hour. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Concentration helps a man in his material progress also. He will have a very good out-turn of work in his office or business house. What was cloudy and hazy before becomes clear and definite. What was difficult before becomes easy now, and what was complex, bewildering and confusing before comes easily within the mental grasp. You can achieve anything through concentration. Nothing is impossible for a man who practises regular concentration. He who practises concentration will possess very good health and very clear mental vision.

If you read with concentration the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana or the 11th Skandha of the Bhagavata several times, you will get new ideas each time. Through concentration you will get penetrative insight. Subtle esoteric meanings will flash out in the field of mental consciousness. You will understand the inner depths of philosophical significance.

Everybody does concentrate to a certain extent when he reads a book, when he writes a letter, when he plays tennis, and in fact, when he does any kind of work. But for spiritual purposes, concentration should be developed to an infinite degree.

When you study a book with profound interest, you do not hear if a man shouts and calls you by your name. You do not see a person when he stands in front of you. You do not smell the sweet fragrance of the flowers that are placed on the table by your side. This is concentration or one-pointedness of mind. The mind is fixed firmly on one thing. You must have such a deep concentration when you think of God or the Atman. It is easy to concentrate the mind on a worldly object, because the mind takes interest in it naturally through force of habit. The grooves are already cut in the brain. You will have to train the mind gradually by daily practice of concentration by fixing it again and again on the picture of God or on the Self within. The mind will not move now to external objects, as it experiences immense joy from the practice of concentration.

There is great concentration when you play cards or chess, but the mind is not filled with pure and divine thoughts. The mental contents are of an undesirable nature. You can hardly experience the divine thrill, ecstasy and elevation of mind when it is filled with impure thoughts. Every object has its own mental associations. You will have to fill up the mind with sublime spiritual thoughts. Then only the mind will be expurgated of all worldly thoughts. The picture of Lord Jesus or Buddha or Krishna is associated with sublime, soul-stirring ideas; chess and cards are associated with ideas of gambling, cheating and so forth.

For a neophyte, the practice of concentration is disgusting and tiring in the beginning. He has to cut new grooves in the mind and brain. After some months, he will get great interest in concentration. He will enjoy a new kind of happiness, the concentration-Ananda. He will become restless if he fails to enjoy this new kind of happiness even for one day. Concentration is the only way to get rid of the worldly miseries and tribulations. Your only duty is to practise concentration. You have taken this physical body to practise concentration, and through concentration, to realise the Self. Charity and Rajasuya Yajna are nothing when compared to concentration. They are playthings only.

Concentration of the mind on God after purification can give you real happiness and knowledge. You are born for this purpose only. You are carried away to external objects through Raga and Moha. Concentrate upon God in the heart. Dive deep. Merge within.

Those who practise concentration off and on will have a steady mind only occasionally. Sometimes the mind will begin to wander and will be quite unfit for application. You must have a mind that will obey you at all times sincerely and carry out all your commands in the best possible manner at any time. Steady and systematic practice of Raja Yoga will make the mind very obedient and faithful.

3

TRATAKA OR STEADY GAZING

Trataka is steady gazing at a particular point or object without winking. Trataka is the alpha beta of concentration. It is the first exercise for Yogic students in concentration. It is an auxiliary in mental focussing. It is mainly intended for developing concentration and mental focussing. It removes Vikshepa or mental vacillations. There is no other effective method for control of the mind. Sri Ramana Maharshi, the famous Jnani of Tiruvannamalai, is doing this exercise even today. When you visit his Ashram, you can see this clearly. When he is seated on his sofa in his room, he is gazing at the walls. When he sits in the verandah on an easy chair, he steadily looks at the distant hills or at the sky. This enables him to keep up a balanced state of mind. Nothing can distract his mind. He is very calm and cool always. He is not at all distracted by anyone even though his Bhaktas might be talking and singing by his side.

You can do Trataka on any picture of the Lord, either of Krishna, Rama or Siva, or on the Saligram. Sit in Padmasana. Place the picture in front of you. You can sit on a chair also. Fix the picture on the wall in front of your eyes. Look at it steadily without winking. Gaze at the head; then at the body; then at the legs. Repeat the same process again and again. When your mind calms down, look at a particular place only. Be steady till tears begin to flow. Repeat your Ishta Mantra, "Hari Om", "Sri Ram" or Gayatri during Trataka.

Visualisation

Trataka with open eyes is followed by visualisation. Visualisation is the calling up of a clear mental image of anything. Trataka and visualisation do help a lot in concentration.

Gaze at the picture of the Lord, your Ishta Devata, for a few minutes and close your eyes. Then try to visualise the picture mentally. Look through the mind at the mental picture of your Ishta Devata. You will have a well-defined or clear-cut picture of the Lord. When it fades, open your eyes and gaze. Repeat the process 5 or 6 times. You will be able to visualise clearly your Ishta Devata or tutelary deity after some months' practice.

It is difficult to fix your mind in the beginning on the whole picture of the Lord, because all the rays of the mind are not collected. Sometimes you can visualise the face, sometimes the feet, sometimes the eyes. Fix the mind on that part of the picture which the mind likes best.

Do not bother yourself if you are not able to have perfect visualisation of the picture of the Lord with closed eyes. Try to produce even a hazy picture. By repeated practice, the hazy picture will assume a well-defined, clear-cut form.

If you find it difficult to visualise even a hazy picture of the Ishta Devata, fix the mind on the effulgent light in the heart and take this as a form of the Lord or Devi.

If you are not able to form the image of your Ishta Devata, if you are not able to fix the mind on your tutelary deity, you may try to hear the sound of the Mantra repeated by you or think of the letters of the Mantra in order. This will stop mind-wandering.

Continue your practice vigorously and regularly. You will succeed. What is wanted is Prema for the Lord. Cultivate this more and more. Let it flow unceasingly and spontaneously. This is more important than visualisation

Targets for Trataka Practice

Write the word OM in black ink on the wall. Sit in front of the drawing. Concentrate on it with open eyes till tears come in the eyes. Then close the eyes. Visualise the picture of OM. Then open the eyes and again gaze till lachrymation manifests. Gradually increase the period. There are students who can gaze for one hour.

Get an OM picture, fix it on the wall and concentrate on this. Pictures are sold in the bazaar. Trataka steadies the wandering mind and removes Vikshepa or tossing of the mind. Instead of gazing at OM, you may gaze at a big black dot on the wall. The walls will present a golden colour during Trataka. Or draw a big black dot on a white paper and fix it on the wall. This will be a target for you to concentrate your mind upon. Gaze at this black dot in the paper.

Lie down on an open terrace and gaze at a particular bright star or on the full moon. After sometime, you will see lights of different colours. Again sometime later, you will see only a particular colour throughout and all other surrounding stars will disappear. When you gaze at the moon, you will see only a bright moon on a black background. At times you will see a huge mass of light all around you. When gazing becomes more intense, you can also see two or three moons of the same size, and at times, you cannot see any moon at all even though your eyes may be wide open.

Select at random any place in the open sky in the morning or evening hours and gaze at it steadily. You will get new inspiration.

Look at a mirror and gaze at the pupil of your eye.

Some persons do Trataka on the space between the two eyebrows or on the tip of the nose. Even during walking, some persons do Trataka on the tip of the nose.

Advanced students can do Trataka on the inner Chakras or Padmas. Muladhara, Anahata, Ajna and Sahasrara are the important centres for Trataka.

Keep a Ghee light before you and gaze at the flames. Some astral entities give Darshan through the flames.

Very few Yogis do Trataka on the sun. It requires the help of an experienced man by their side. They begin to gaze at the rising sun, and after gradual practice, they do Trataka on the sun even at midday. They get some special Siddhis by this practice. All are not fit for this Sadhana The other exercises mentioned above will suit everyone and they are harmless. But sun-gazing should not be attempted until you get the help of an experienced man.

Going beyond one's own power and gazing at the sun without any help may produce serious troubles. For gazing at the sun, you must have your guide by your side. The Guru will prescribe some oil to rub on your head to avoid such serious troubles and to cool the system. You should apply honey to your eyes at night when you practise sun-gazing.

Some Useful Hints

When you do the practice in your meditation room, sit in your favourite posture, Siddhasana or Padmasana. At other times you can do Trataka in a standing or sitting posture. When you sit and do Trataka, do not shake the body.

Trataka can be profitably done even when you walk. As you walk along the streets, do not look hither and thither. Gaze at the tip of the nose or at the toes. There are many persons who do not look at the face when they talk to others. They have their own gaze at a particular place and talk. No particular Asana is required for this Sadhana.

Practise Trataka for one minute on the first day. Then cautiously increase the period every week. Do not strain the eyes. Do it gently with ease and comfort as long as you can conveniently do. Do not be impatient. Gradual, steady practice is required. Gazing at a spot even for full three hours continuously counts for nothing if the mind is wandering. The mind also must be on the spot. Then only you will advance in this practice and attain many psychic powers.

Those who cannot gaze steadily even for a second in spite of several attempts need not worry much. They can close their eyes and gaze at an imaginary spot at the space between the two eyebrows.

In some people who have weak capillaries, the eyes may become red. They need not be alarmed unnecessarily—the redness of the eyes will pass off quickly. Do not tax your eyes by over-practice. When you feel tired, close your eyes and keep your mind on the object of Trataka.

Those who have very weak eye-capillaries should do Trataka after closing their eyes on any imaginary spot within or without.

Benefits of the Practice of Trataka

While doing Trataka on any object, the same object of gazing will appear as something else during the practice. You will have many other visions. Different people have different experiences. You will not even believe certain things when others tell you of their experiences. But Trataka alone cannot give you all Siddhis. After control of the mind, when the mind becomes steady, you will have to manipulate it by prescribed methods for the attainment of powers. Therefore, the powers that are obtained by this practice may vary in different persons. It depends upon the further training of the mind in a particular way.

Young aspirants who pose as big Yogis neglect such practices and ask whether Trataka practice is Moksha. Certainly this practice itself is not Moksha. Different practices are for the attainment of Moksha. One may attain the goal by a particular method, others by different methods. Remember this point always. Otherwise you will be neglecting all the methods. You will be misguided and you will lose the goal if you neglect the Sadhana.

By the practice of Trataka, diseases of the eyes are removed. Eyesight improves. Many have thrown away their spectacles after taking to this practice. Will-power is developed. Vikshepa is destroyed. Trataka steadies the mind. Clairvoyance, thought-reading, psychic cure and other Siddhis are obtained very easily.

Trataka is a very effective, powerful remedy for a wandering mind. It prepares the mind undoubtedly for perfect Dhyana and Samadhi. This is assuredly a means to the end. You must ascend the Yogic ladder or staircase step by step. Several persons have been benefited by this useful exercise. Why not you also, dear friend, sincerely attempt to practise this from this moment? I have given you different exercises for Trataka. Select anyone of the methods that suits you best and realise the spiritual benefits.

Practise Trataka for six months. Then you can take up advanced lessons in concentration and meditation. Be regular and systematic in your Sadhana. If there is a break, make up the deficiency or loss the next day.

4

WHERE TO CONCENTRATE

There can be no concentration without something upon which the mind may rest. The mind can be fixed easily on a pleasing object such as a jasmine flower, a mango, an orange or a loving friend. It is difficult to fix the mind in the beginning on an object which it dislikes such as faecal matter, a cobra, an enemy or an ugly face.

Practise concentration till the mind is well established in the object of concentration. When the mind runs away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object. Lord Krishna says in the Gita:

Yato Yato Nischarati Manas Chanchalam Asthiram
Tatastato Niyamyaitad Atmanyeva Vasam Nayet

"As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self." (Gita, VI-26)

Concentration is purely a mental process. It needs an inward turning of the mind. It is not a muscular exercise. There should be no undue strain on the brain. You should not fight and wrestle with the mind violently. Avoid tension anywhere in the body or the mind. Think gently of the object in a continuous manner. Do not allow the mind to wander away.

You can concentrate internally on any of the seven plexuses or Chakras or centres of spiritual energy, viz., Muladhara, Svadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddha, Ajna and Sahasrara. You can concentrate on the tip of the nose or on the tip of the tongue or externally on the picture of any

Devata—Hari, Hara, Krishna or Devi. You can concentrate on the tik-tik sound of a watch or on the flame of a candle or on a black point on a wall. You can concentrate on a pencil, a rose flower or any pleasing object.

You can concentrate on Trikuti, the space between the two eyebrows. You can concentrate on the mystic sounds or Anahata Dhvani that you hear from your right ear. You can concentrate on an OM picture. The picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hand and the picture of Lord Vishnu with conch, discus, mace and lotus are very good for concentration. You can concentrate on the picture of your Guru or of any saint. Vedantins try to fix the mind on the Atman, the Inner Self. This is their Dharana.

Practise various sorts of concentration. This will train or discipline your mind wonderfully. Now concentrate on the Himalayas, a very great object. Then concentrate on a mustard or a pin-point. Now concentrate on a distant object. Then concentrate on a near object. Now concentrate on a colour, sound, touch, smell or taste. Then concentrate on the tik-tik of a watch. Now concentrate on the virtue mercy. Then concentrate on the virtue patience. Now concentrate on the Sloka "*Jyotishamapi Tat Jyoti..*". Then concentrate on "*Satyam Jnanam Anantam*". Now concentrate on the image of Lord Siva. Then concentrate on the "*Aham Brahmasmi*" Mahavakya.

Train the mind in concentration on various objects, gross and subtle, and of various sizes, medium and big. In course of time, a strong habit of concentration will be formed. The moment you sit for concentration, the mood will come at once quite easily.

Some Illustrative Exercises

Ask your friend to show you some playing cards. Immediately after the exposure, describe the forms you have seen. Give the number and name such as king of clubs, ten of spades, queen of diamonds and jack of hearts.

Read two or three pages of a book. Then close the book. Now attend to what you have read. Abandon all distracting thoughts. Focus your attention carefully. Allow the mind to associate, classify, group, combine and compare. You will get now a fund of knowledge and information on the subject. Mere skipping over the pages inadvertently is of no use. There are students who read a book within a few hours. If you ask them to reproduce some important points of the book, they will blink. If you attend to the subject on hand very carefully, you will receive clear, strong impressions. If the impressions are strong, you will have very good memory.

Read one page in the Gita. Close the book. Concentrate on what you have read. Find out parallel lines in the Mahabharata, the Upanishads and Bhagavata. Compare and contrast.

Sit in your favourite meditative pose about one foot from a watch. Concentrate on the tik-tik sound slowly. Whenever the mind runs, again and again try to hear the sound. Just see how long the mind can be fixed continuously on the sound.

Sit again in your favourite Asana. Close your eyes. Close the ears with your thumbs or plug the ears with wax or cotton. Try to hear the Anahata sounds. You will hear various kinds of sounds such as flute, violin, kettledrum, thunder-storm, conch, bells and the humming of a bee. Try to hear the gross sounds first. Hear only one kind of sound. If the mind runs, you can shift it from the gross to the subtle, or from the subtle to the gross. Generally you will hear sounds in your right ear. Occasionally you may hear in your left ear also. But try to stick to the sound of one ear. You will get one-pointedness of mind. This is an easy way to capture the mind, because it is enchanted by the sweet sound, just as a snake is hypnotised by the notes of the snake-charmer.

Keep a candle flame in front of you and try to concentrate on the flame. When you are tired of doing this, close your eyes and try to visualise the flame. Do it for half a minute and increase the time to five or ten minutes according to your taste, temperament and capacity. You will see Rishis and Devatas when you enter into deep concentration.

In a lying posture, concentrate on the moon. Whenever the mind runs, again and again bring it back to the image of the moon. This exercise is very beneficial in the case of some persons having an emotional temperament.

In the above manner, you can concentrate on any star you may single out from the millions of stars shining above your head.

Sit by the side of a river where you can hear a roaring sound like "OM". Concentrate on that sound as long as you like. This is very thrilling and inspiring.

Lie on your bed in the open air and concentrate on the blue expansive sky above. Your mind will expand immediately. You will be elevated. The blue sky will remind you of the infinite nature of the Self.

Sit in a comfortable posture and concentrate on anyone of the numerous abstract virtues such as mercy, compassion, etc. Dwell upon the virtue as long as you can.

The practice to concentrate on the Sandhi or junction between the waking state and the dreaming state and to prolong that Sandhi is a difficult one. At night, sit in a quiet room and watch carefully the mind. You will be able to get at the state of junction. Practise regularly for three months. You will have success.

Concentration on the Internal Chakras

A Raja Yogi concentrates on the Trikuti or Ajna Chakra. Those Bhaktas who meditate on Lord Siva also concentrate on the Ajna Chakra. Ajna Chakra is the seat of the mind in the waking state. You can easily control the mind if you can concentrate on this region. Light is seen during concentration in this region very quickly—even in a day's practice—by some persons. You press the button and the light flashes out from the torch in the twinkling of an eye. Even so, the Yogi concentrates and presses the button at the Ajna Chakra and the divine light flashes out immediately.

Yogins and Vedantins should concentrate on the Ajna Chakra. He who wants to meditate on Virat and he who wants to help the world should select this region for his concentration.

A Bhakta or devotee should concentrate on the heart, the seat of emotion and feeling. He who concentrates on the heart gets great Ananda. He who wants to get Ananda should concentrate on the heart.

The crown of the head or Sahasrara is another seat for concentration. Some Vedantins concentrate here. Some Yogins concentrate at the tip of the nose. Stick to one centre in concentration. Cling to it tenaciously. Stick to it. Never change it. Your Guru will select the centre for concentration if you are a student full of faith. If you are a man of self-reliance, you can select it yourself.

Bhrumadhya Drishti and Nasikagra Drishti

Bhrumadhya Drishti is fixing one's eyes between the eyebrows. It is Ajna Chakra. Sit on Padmasana or Siddhasana in your meditation room and practise this gaze gently from half a minute to half an hour. There must not be the least violence in this practice. Gradually increase the period. This Yogic Kriya removes Vikshepa or the tossing of the mind and develops concentration. Lord Krishna prescribes this practice in Chapter V, Sloka 27: "*Sparshan Kritva Bahir Bahyaschakshuschaivantare Bhruvoh*. Having excluded the outward contacts and with gaze fixed between the eyebrows". This is known as the 'frontal gaze', because the eyes are directed towards the frontal bone and the bone of the forehead. In this Drishti, direct the gaze towards the Ajna Chakra with closed eyes. If you practise the Drishti with open eyes, it may produce headache. Foreign particles may fall into the eyes. There may be distraction of the mind also. Do not strain the eyes. Practise gently.

You can select for yourself either this gaze or the 'nasal gaze' according to your taste, temperament and capacity.

The 'nasal gaze' is called Nasikagra Drishti. The gaze is fixed at the tip of the nose. Even when you walk in the street, keep the nasal gaze. Lord Krishna prescribes this in Chapter VI, Sloka 13 : "*Samprekshya nasikagram*. Looking fixedly at the point of the nose without looking around". You should steadily direct your gaze towards the tip of your nose and keep the mind fixed on the Self only. This practice steadies the mind and develops the power of concentration.

When you practise concentration at the tip of the nose, you will experience Divya Gandha, various sorts of fragrance. When you concentrate at the Ajna Chakra, you will experience Divya Jyoti. These are experiences to give you encouragement, to push you up in the spiritual path and convince you of the existence of transcendental or super-physical things. Do not stop your Sadhana now.

If you get headache or pain by concentrating on the Trikuti by turning the eyes upwards, give up the practice at once. Concentrate on the heart. If you find it difficult to concentrate on your heart or on the Trikuti or on top of the head, if you experience headache or pain in the skull, shift your centre of concentration to any object outside the body.

Where the Hatha Yogis Concentrate

A Hatha Yogi fixes his mind on the Sushumna Nadi, the middle path in the spinal canal, and on a specified centre, viz., the Muladhara or the Manipura or the Ajna Chakra. Some Yogis ignore the lower Chakras and fix their mind on the Ajna Chakra only. Their theory is that by controlling the Ajna Chakra, all the lower Chakras can be automatically controlled. When you concentrate on a Chakra, a thread-like connection is formed in the beginning between the mind and the Chakra. Then the Yogi ascends along the Sushumna from Chakra to Chakra. The ascent is made gradually by patient efforts. Even a mere shaking of the opening of the Sushumna causes a great deal of Ananda. You become intoxicated. You will forget the world entirely. When the opening of the Sushumna is shaken a bit, the Kula-Kundalini Sakti tries to enter the Sushumna. Great Vairagya comes in. You will become fearless. You will behold various visions. You will witness the splendid 'Antarjyoti'. This is termed 'Unmani Avastha'. You will get different Siddhis, different types of Ananda and you will get different kinds of knowledge by controlling the different Chakras and operating on them. If you have conquered the Muladhara Chakra, you have conquered the earth plane already. If you have conquered the Manipura Chakra, you have already conquered fire. Fire will not burn you. Panchadharana—five kinds of Dharana—will help you to conquer the five elements. Learn them under a Guru who is a developed Yogi.

5

HOW TO DEVELOP CONCENTRATION

You must evince good interest in the practice of concentration. Then only your whole attention will be directed towards the object upon which you wish to concentrate. There can be really no concentration without a remarkable degree of interest and attention shown by the practitioner.

You must try to be always cheerful and peaceful. Then only you will have concentration of mind. The practice of friendship with equals, compassion towards inferiors or distressed persons, complacency towards superiors or virtuous persons and indifference towards sinners or wicked persons will produce Chitta Prasada or cheerfulness and serenity, and destroy hatred, jealousy and dislike.

Celibacy, Pranayama, reduction of wants and activities, renunciation of objects, solitude, silence, discipline of the senses, annihilation of lust and greed, control of anger, non-mixing with undesirable persons, giving up of newspaper reading and cinema—all these pave a long way in increasing the power of concentration.

Concentration increases by curtailing wants and desires, by observing Mauna for one or two hours, by remaining in seclusion in a room for one or two hours daily, by practising Pranayama, by prayer, by increasing the daily sittings in meditation, by Vichara and by cultivating more mental non-attachment.

Reduce your activities. You will have more concentration and inner life.

Pranayama and Concentration

Pranayama or control of breath removes the veil of Rajas and Tamas that envelops the Sattva of the mind. It purifies the Nadis. It makes the mind firm and steady and thereby renders it fit for concentration. The dross of the mind is cleansed by Pranayama, just as the dross of gold is got rid of by melting. A Hatha Yogi tries to concentrate his mind by having his breath controlled through Pranayama.

According to the Hatha Yogic School, a Yogi who can suspend his breath by Kumbhaka for twenty minutes can have very good Dharana. He will have a very tranquil mind. Pranayama steadies the mind, removes Vikshepa and increases the power of concentration. Those who practise Khechari Mudra by cutting the *frenum lingua* and lengthening the tongue and fixing it in the hole beyond the palate by taking it upwards will have good Dharana.

The practice of concentration and the practice of Pranayama are interdependent. If you practise Pranayama, you will get concentration. Natural Pranayama follows the practice of concentration. A Hatha Yogi practises Pranayama and then controls the mind. He rises upwards from below. A Raja Yogi practises concentration and thus controls his Prana. He comes downwards from above. They both meet on a common platform in the end.

The Hatha Yogi tries to concentrate his mind by having his breath controlled through Pranayama, while the Raja Yogi tries to concentrate his mind by Chitta-vritti-nirodha, restraining the various modifications of the Chitta, by not allowing the mind to assume various shapes of objects. The Raja Yogi does not care for control of breath, but his breath becomes necessarily controlled when his mind is controlled. Hatha Yoga is a branch of Raja Yoga.

There are different practices according to different capacities, tastes and temperaments. For some the practice of Pranayama will be easy to start with; for others the practice of concentration will be easy to begin with. The latter had already practised Pranayama in their previous birth. Therefore they take up in this birth the next limb of Yoga, viz., concentration.

Enemies of Concentration

Too much physical exertion, too much mixing with ladies and undesirable persons, too much talking, too much eating and too much walking cause distraction of mind. Those who practise concentration must abandon these things.

If emotions disturb you during concentration, do not mind them. They will pass away soon. If you try to drive them, you will have to tax your will force. Have an indifferent attitude. The Vedantin uses the formulae: "I don't care. Get out. I am Sakshi, witness of the mental modifications", to drive the emotions. The Bhakta simply prays and help comes from God.

Still the mind. Silence the bubbling thoughts. Calm the emotions. Check the intellectual functioning of the Chitta by Abhyasa or Yogic practice and the emotional side of the mind by Vairagya or dispassion. Then alone the mind will become calm. Then alone it will come under your control quite easily.

Put a break on the thought-process. Do not pay any attention to the intruding thoughts. Give the suggestion to the mind: "I do not care whether they are there or not". In other words, be indifferent. The intruding thoughts will quit the mental factory soon. They will not cause any trouble. This is the secret of mental discipline.

Improvement in concentration will be visible little by little only. Do not be discouraged on any account. Be regular in your practice. Stop not the practice even for a single day.

Thought Control

The mind is like a wheel which revolves endlessly with tremendous velocity. It generates new thoughts with every revolution. This wheel is set in motion by the vibration of psychic Prana or subtle Prana. The practice of Pranayama lessens the velocity of the mind, slows down the wheel gradually. Perfect control of Prana will bring the wheel to a standstill.

Alcohol, meat, Rajasic foods, cinema, novel reading, obscene songs, obscene sights, evil company and obscene talks will make the wheel of mind revolve very rapidly; whereas fruits, Sattvic food, company of Mahatmas, study of religious books, solitude, Japa, Kirtan, concentration, meditation and enquiry of "Who am I?" will slow down the wheel and eventually bring it down to a standstill.

The fewer the desires, the lesser the thoughts. Become absolutely desireless. The wheel will stop entirely. If you reduce your wants, if you do not try to fulfil your desires, if you try to eradicate your desires one by one, your thoughts will diminish in frequency and length. The number of thoughts per minute will also diminish. The fewer the thoughts, the greater the peace. Remember this always. A wealthy man who does speculation in a big city and who has a large number of thoughts has a restless mind in spite of his comforts; whereas a Sadhu who lives in a cave of the Himalayas and who is practising thought control is very happy in spite of his poverty.

The fewer the thoughts, the greater the mental strength and concentration. Suppose the average number of thoughts that pass through your brain within one hour is one hundred. If you succeed in reducing them by constant practice of concentration and meditation to ninety, you have gained ten per cent of the power of concentration of mind. Every thought that is reduced adds strength and peace to the mind. Reduction of even one thought will give you mental strength and peace of mind. You may not be able to feel this in the beginning as you do not possess a subtle intellect; but there is a spiritual thermometer inside to register the reduction of even a single thought. If you reduce one thought, the mental strength that you gain by this reduction will help you to reduce a second thought easily.

In the rubber plantations, the planters take recourse to the method of thinning out the rubber trees by cutting the small surplus trees which stand in the vicinity of big trees. By so doing they can tap more milk or rubber juice from the big trees. Even so, you must thin out the thoughts by destroying them one by one to drink the ambrosial milk or nectar of immortality.

When the tail of a lizard is cut, the cut end will flutter about for some time, as there is still a little residual Prana in the tail. After one or two minutes, all motion will cease. Even so, even after the thinning and reduction of thoughts, some thoughts will move about like the tail of the lizard. But they are powerless. They cannot do any serious harm. There is no vitality in them. Just as the drowning man tries to catch anything to save himself, so also, these lifeless thoughts try their level best to come back to their previous state of life and vigour. If you go on regularly with your daily practice of concentration and meditation, they will die by themselves like a Gheeless lamp.

When you give a blow on the head of a snake with a stick and crush its head, it remains absolutely motionless for some time. You think it is dead. All on a sudden it raises its head and runs away. Even so, the thoughts that were once crushed and suppressed by you regain strength and raise their heads. They must be destroyed totally beyond resurrection.

Concentration will increase by lessening the number of thoughts. Certainly it is an uphill task to reduce the number of thoughts. In the beginning it will tax you much. The task will be very unpleasant. But later on you will rejoice as you will get immense strength of mind and internal peace by reduction of thoughts. Armed with patience, perseverance, vigilance, fiery determination and iron will, you can crush the thoughts easily just as you crush a lemon or an orange with ease. After crushing them, it will be easy for you to root them out. Mere crushing or suppression will not suffice. There may be again resurrection of thoughts. They should be totally eradicated just as a loose tooth is rooted out.

Just as you remove at once the pebble in your shoes that troubles you, so also you must be able to remove at once any tormenting thought from your mind. Then only have you gained sufficient strength in the control of thought. Then only have you attained some real progress in the spiritual path.

It will be very difficult to fix the mind on one thought in the beginning. Diminish the number of thoughts. Try to have thoughts on one subject. If you think of a rose, you can have all sorts of thoughts connected with the rose only. You can think of different kinds of roses that are grown in different parts of the world. You can think of the various preparations that are made out of the rose and their uses. You can allow even thoughts of other kinds of flowers to enter. But do not entertain thoughts of fruits and vegetables. Check the aimless wandering of the mind. Do not have thoughts at random when you think of a rose. Gradually you can fix the mind on one thought only. You will have to discipline the mind daily. Eternal vigilance is needed in thought control.

Just as in a surgical clinic the assistant surgeon allows only one patient to enter the consultation room and the operation theatre, so also you will have to allow only one thought-wave to rise from the mind and settle down calmly. Then allow another thought to enter. Drive off all extraneous thoughts that have nothing to do with the subject-matter on hand. An efficient control over the thoughts through long practice is absolutely necessary for successful concentration and meditation. Note this point carefully.

Control of thought is a *sine qua non*. You should not waste even a single thought. Watch every thought very carefully. Shut out all useless thoughts from the mind. Your life must tally with your meditation. Do not give new strength to evil thoughts by constant thinking. Restrain them. Substitute sublime thoughts.

Transcend the sublime thoughts also and enter into a thoughtless state. If all the thoughts are eliminated, then there remains nothing which can be called the mind. So, thoughts are the mind. Again, there is no such thing as the world independent of and apart from thoughts. Identify yourself with pure consciousness.

6

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

While concentration is fixing the mind on a concrete object or an abstract idea, meditation is a regular flow of thought with regard to the object of concentration. It is an unbroken, uninterrupted or incessant flow of ideas of the object that is being concentrated upon. Meditation follows concentration. It is very difficult to say where concentration ends and meditation begins. In Dhyana, all worldly thoughts are shut out from the mind. The mind is filled or saturated with divine thoughts, with the divine glory, with the divine presence.

Meditation is the flow of continuous thought of one thing or God or Atman. Meditation is the keeping up of one idea of God alone always like the continuous flow of oil from one vessel to another, *Tailadharavat*. Yogins call this Dhyana. Jnanins term this Nididhyasana. Bhaktas style this Bhajan.

Tatra Pratyayaikatanata Dhyanam. A continuous flow of perception or thought is Dhyana or meditation. There is a continuous current in the mind of one object like the Pravaha or flow of water in a river. There is only one Vritti in the mind. It is *Ekarupa-vritti-pravaha*.

Meditation is the seventh rung or step in the ladder of Yoga. Yama (self-restraint), Niyama (religious observance), Asana (posture), Pranayama (restraint or regulation of breath), Pratyahara (abstraction or withdrawal of the senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (superconscious state or blissful union with the Supreme Self) are the eight steps of Yoga.

Dhyanam Nirvishayam Manah. This is how meditation is defined in the Patanjali Yoga Sutras. When the mind becomes Nirvishaya or free from thinking of sense-objects and their enjoyments, it is meditation. That state of the mind wherein there are no Vishayas or sensual thoughts is meditation.

To think of nothing is to attain the highest contemplation. In Nididhyasana or profound and continued meditation, thinking ceases. There is only one idea of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*". When this idea also is given up, Nirvikalpa Samadhi ensues.

In Vedanta or the path of Jnana, the terms 'Manana' and 'Nididhyasana' are very frequently used. Manana is reflection. Nididhyasana is meditation on Atman. It is deep and intense contemplation. The mind is perfectly established in the Absolute. No worldly thoughts will intrude now. The contemplation is like a steady flow of oil.

Lord Jesus says: "Empty thyself and I shall fill thee". This corresponds to the teaching of Patanjali Maharshi: "*Yogah-chitta-vrittinirodhah*". Yoga is restraint or annihilation of all mental modifications, of all mental functions. This emptying process or making the mind blank is no doubt a trying discipline. But continued practice of an intense type will bring success. There is no doubt of this.

The Meditation Process

Sit in a lonely place on Padma, Siddha, Svastika or Sukha Asana. Free yourself from all passions, emotions and impulses. Subjugate the senses. Withdraw the mind from objects. Now the mind will be calm, one-pointed, pure and subtle. With the help of this trained instrument, disciplined mind, contemplate on that one Infinite Self. Do not think of anything else. Do not allow any worldly thought to enter the mind. Do not allow the mind to think of any physical or mental enjoyment. When it indulges in these thoughts, give it a good hammering. Then it will move towards God. Just as the Ganga flows continuously towards the sea, thoughts of God should flow continuously towards the Lord. Just as oil, when poured from one vessel to another, flows in an unbroken continuous stream, just as the harmonious sound produced from the ringing of bells falls upon the ear in a continuous stream, so also the mind should 'flow' towards God in one continuous stream. There must be a continuous divine Vritti-pravaha, Svajatiya-vritti-pravaha, from the Sattvic mind towards God through continuous Sadhana.

In meditation, you will have to develop the Svajatiya-vritti-pravaha. Make the thoughts of Brahman or Divine Presence flow like inundation or flood. Do Vijatiya-vritti-tiraskara. Renounce the thoughts of objects. Drive them away with the whip of Viveka and Vichara. There is struggle in the beginning. It is trying indeed. But later on, as your will grows stronger and stronger and as you grow in purity and Brahma-chintana, Sadhana becomes easy. You rejoice in the life of unity. You get strength from Atman. Inner strength grows when all the Vishaya Vrittis are thinned out and the mind becomes one-pointed.

Allow the one Brahmic idea to flow gently and continuously. Constantly think of God. The mind should always move towards God. Fasten the mind with a fine silk thread to the lotus feet of Lord Siva or Hari. Drive out foreign or extraneous worldly ideas gently. Try to keep up the Brahmakara Vritti by repeating OM or "*Aham Brahmasmi*" mentally very often. The idea of infinity, the idea of an ocean of light, the idea of all-knowledge and all-Ananda should accompany the mental repetition of OM. If the mind wanders, repeat verbally six times the Dirgha Pranava with 3½ Matras. This process will remove the Vikshepa and all other obstacles.

When you begin to sweep a room that was kept closed for six months, various kinds of dirt come out from the corners of the room. Similarly, during meditation, under pressure of Yoga, through the Grace of God, various kinds of impurities float about on the surface of the mind. Bravely remove them one by one by suitable methods and counter-virtues with patience and strenuous efforts. The old vicious Samskaras revenge when you try to suppress them. Do not be afraid. They lose their strength after some time. You have to tame the mind just as you tame a wild elephant or a tiger. Do not indulge in vicious thoughts which serve as food for the mind. Make the mind Antarmukha, self-introspective. Substitute good, virtuous, sublime thoughts. Feed the mind with ennobling aspirations and ideals. Old vicious Samskaras will be gradually thinned out and eventually obliterated. Now the Brahmakara Vritti will dawn. Coupled with Brahma Jnana, this is the destroyer of Avidya. Allow the Brahmakara Vritti to flow steadily like Tailadhara. Now Niratisayananda, infinite bliss, will flow. At this stage, the whole universe will appear as Satchidananda only. This thought also will die. You will then enter the Sahajananda state.

Even if the mind runs outside during your practice of meditation, do not bother. Allow it to run. Slowly try to bring it to your Lakshya or centre. By repeated practice, the mind will be finally focussed in your heart, in the Atman, the Indweller of your heart, the final goal of life. In the beginning, the mind may run out 80 times. Within six months, it may run 70 times; within a year, it may run 50 times; within 2 years, it may run 30 times; within 5 years, it will be completely fixed in the Divine Consciousness. Then it will not run out at all even if you try your level best to bring it out, like the wandering bull which was in the habit of running to gardens of different landlords for eating grass, but which now eats fresh gram and extract of cotton seeds in its own resting place. This is the practical experience of those who have gained complete mastery over their mind.

When you start a fire, you heap up some straw, pieces of paper, thin pieces of wood. The fire gets extinguished quickly. You blow it again several times through the mouth or the blow-pipe. After sometime, it becomes a small conflagration. You can hardly extinguish it now even with great efforts. Even so, in the beginning of meditation in neophytes, they fall down from meditation into their old grooves. They will have to lift up their mind again and again and fix it on the Lakshya. When the meditation becomes deep and steady, they get established in God eventually. Then the meditation becomes Sahaja or natural. It becomes habitual. Use the blow-pipe of Tivra Vairagya and intense meditation to kindle the fire of meditation.

During meditation, note how long you can shut out all worldly thoughts. Watch the mind very carefully. If it is for twenty minutes, try to increase the period to thirty or forty minutes and gradually to two or three hours. Fill the mind with thoughts of God again and again.

Kinds of Meditation

There are different kinds of meditation. A particular kind is best suited to a particular mind. The kind of meditation varies according to taste, temperament, capacity and type of mind of the individual. A devotee meditates on his tutelary deity or Ishta Devata. A Raja Yogi meditates on the special Purusha or Isvara who is not touched by the afflictions, desires and Karmas. A Hatha Yogi meditates on the Chakras and their presiding deities. A Jnani meditates on his own Self or Atman. You yourself will have to find out the kind of meditation that is suitable for you. If you are not able to do this, you will have to consult a teacher or preceptor who has attained Self-realisation. He will be able to know the nature of your mind and the correct method of meditation for you.

A Raja Yogi enters into the meditative mood deliberately by practising Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara and Dharana. A Bhakta enters into the meditative mood by cultivating pure love for God. A Vedantin or a Jnana Yogi enters into the meditative mood by acquiring the Sadhana Chatushtaya or the Four Means of Salvation and hearing the Srutis and reflecting on what he has heard. A Hatha Yogi enters into the meditative mood by practising deep and constant Pranayama.

The mind assumes the form of the object it cognises. Then only perception is possible. A Bhakta constantly meditates on the form of his tutelary deity or Ishta Devata. The mind always takes the form of the deity. When he is established in his meditation, when he attains the stage of Para Bhakti or supreme devotion, he sees his Ishta Devata only everywhere. The names and forms vanish. A devotee of Lord Krishna sees Lord Krishna only everywhere and experiences the state described in the Gita: "*Vaasudeva Sarvam Iti.* Everything is Vaasudeva—Krishna—only". A Jnani or a Vedantin sees his own Self or Atman everywhere. The world of names and forms vanishes from his view. He experiences the utterances of the seers of the Upanishads: "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma.* All indeed is Brahman".

Meditation is of two main kinds—Saguna meditation and Nirguna meditation. Saguna meditation is concrete meditation. Nirguna meditation is abstract meditation. In concrete meditation, the Yogic student concentrates on the form of the Lord—Krishna, Rama, Siva, Hari, Gayatri or Devi. In abstract meditation, he concentrates the whole energy of the mind on one idea of God or Atman and avoids comparisons of memories and all other ideas. The one idea fills the whole mind.

When you see the concrete figure of Lord Krishna with open eyes and meditate, it is the concrete form of meditation. When you reflect over the image of Lord Krishna by closing your eyes, it is also a concrete form of meditation, but it is more abstract. When you meditate on the infinite abstract light, it is still more abstract meditation. The former two types belong to the Saguna form of meditation, the latter to the Nirguna form.

Even in Nirguna meditation, there is an abstract form in the beginning for fixing the mind. Later on this form vanishes and the meditator and the meditated become one. Meditation proceeds from the mind only. The help of the mind is always needed either for perception of an object or for the understanding of Brahman. When you read a book with absorbing interest and attention, your mind gets fixed to the ideas. Even so, in Nirguna meditation of Brahman or formless Dhyana, the mind is fixed on one idea, namely, that of Atman.

A beginner should practise concrete meditation. For some, abstract meditation is easier than concrete meditation.

Meditate on the form of Lord Hari with four hands or Lord Krishna with flute in hand or Lord Rama with bow and arrow in hands. This is concrete or gross meditation—Sthula Dhyana. Meditate on silence or peace or Santi. This is abstract or subtle meditation—Sukshma Dhyana. Meditate: "I am an embodiment of silence or peace". This is Vedantic Nirguna meditation. Meditate on bliss or Ananda. This also is abstract meditation. Meditate: "I am an embodiment of bliss or Ananda". This also is Vedantic or Nirguna meditation or Ahamgraha Upasana. Choose any type of meditation according to your temperament, taste, capacity or disposition and reach the goal of life in this very birth.

Meditation may be with or without Japa. In Japa Sahita Dhyana, meditation is attended or associated with Japa. In Japa Rahita Dhyana, Japa is absent; it is pure meditation only. When you repeat "*Om Namo Narayanaya*" mentally or verbally, it is mere Japa. When you repeat the Mantra and at the same time you meditate on the form of Hari with conch, discus, mace, lotus, yellow silken Pitambar, armlets, bracelets, etc., it is Japa Sahita Dhyana. When you progress in meditation, the Japa will drop by itself. You will have pure meditation only. This will constitute Japa Rahita Dhyana.

Start with Saguna Meditation

Algebra, the science of abstract numbers, cannot be understood without a preliminary practice and knowledge of arithmetic, the science of concrete numbers. Kavyas in Sanskrit and higher Vedantic books cannot be understood without a preliminary knowledge of Laghu Siddhanta and Tarka-sangraha. Even so, meditation on abstract Brahman is impossible without a preliminary practice of concentration on a concrete form in the beginning. Approach to the Invisible and the Unknown is to be made through the visible and the known.

An archer first aims at grosser and bigger objects. Then he takes up medium objects. Finally he shoots at finer and subtle objects. Even so, one should take to Saguna meditation to start with, and when the mind is trained and disciplined well, he can have Nirakara, Nirguna meditation. Saguna Upasana removes Vikshepa.

Saguna Upasakas who meditate on the image of the Lord should do Trataka first with open eyes till they can visualise a clear-cut and well-defined picture. Later on they can visualise the picture with closed eyes. The picture must be very pleasing to the mind and the eyes. It should have a good agreeable background. When you have created a strong mental image of your Lord in the mind by continuous practice of meditation on one form, you should not disturb the mental image by changing the picture. Stick to the same picture and strengthen and feel the mental image through repeated practice of Trataka, visualisation and constant meditation on the form. Through force of habit the same mental image will appear quite easily in your mind. Sometimes you may change even your Mantra or formula when the mind is tired or wants variety, but do not change your mental image.

For three or six months, practise Trataka on any picture. After six months' practice of Trataka, meditate on the mental picture of the Murthy from half to two or three hours only in the Trikuti. See and feel that the Ishta Devata is present in every object of the universe. When you meditate, mentally repeat the Mantra of the Devata. Think of the attributes of the Deity such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc. Feel that Sattvic qualities from the Deity flow towards you. Feel that you possess these Sattvic qualities. This is Sattvic or Suddha Bhavana. You will have Darshan of your Ishtam in one or two years if you are sincere in your Sadhana.

Try These Meditations

Meditation on a Murthy or form of the Lord is a concrete form of meditation for people of devotional temperament. This is meditation with Gunas or attributes of God. Repeat the Name of the Lord or pure OM. Think of His attributes—omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc. Your mind will be filled with purity. Enthrone the Lord in the lotus of your heart amidst a blazing light. Mentally think of His feet, legs, chest, head and hands and the ornaments and dress and again come to His feet. Again and again repeat this process.

Here is one kind of meditation for beginners. Sit in Padmasana in a solitary room. Close your eyes. Meditate on the effulgence in the sun, splendour in the moon, glory in the stars, beauty in the sky. Meditate on the magnanimity of the ocean, its infinite nature. Compare the ocean with the infinite Brahman, the waves, foam and blocks of ice to the various names and forms. Identify yourself with the ocean. Become silent. Expand. Expand.

Here is another kind of meditation. Meditate on the Himalayas. Imagine that the river Ganga takes its origin from the icy region of Gangotri, near Uttarkashi, flows through Rishikesh, then Benares and finally enters the Ganga Sagar in the Bay of

Bengal. Himalayas, Ganga and the sea—these three thoughts only should occupy the mind. First take your mind to the icy Gangotri, then along the Ganga, and finally to the sea. Then again take it to the icy Gangotri. Rotate the mind in this manner for 15 minutes.

Imagine that there is a fine garden with lovely flowers. In one corner there are jasmine flowers. In another corner there are beautiful cabbage roses. In the third corner there is the lady of the night. In the fourth corner there are Champak flowers. First meditate on the jasmine. Then take the mind to the rose, then to the lady of the night and finally to the Champak. Again rotate the mind as above. Do this again and again for 15 minutes. Gross meditations like these will prepare the mind for finer abstract meditation on subtle ideas.

Have the figure OM in front of you. Concentrate on this. Do Trataka also with open eyes. This is both Saguna and Nirguna meditation. Keep a picture of OM in your meditation room. You can do Puja for this symbol of Brahman. Burn incense and offer flowers. This suits the modern educated persons.

Repeat OM mentally with Bhava, feeling. Associate: the ideas of Sat-chit-ananda, purity, perfection, "All-joy I am". "All-bliss I am". This is abstract meditation on Nirguna Brahman.

There is a living, universal Power that underlies all these names and forms. Meditate on this Power which is formless. This will form an elementary Nirguna meditation, without any form.

"There is no world. There is neither body nor mind. There is only one Chaitanya, Pure Consciousness. I am that Pure Consciousness." This is Nirguna meditation or meditation without attributes.

Sit in Padmasana. Open the eyes. Gaze steadily on the formless air only. This also is another method of formless meditation. Concentrate on the air. This will lead to the realisation of the nameless and formless Brahman, the One Living Truth.

Imagine that there is a Parama, Ananta, Akhanda Jyoti or supreme, infinite effulgence hidden behind all the phenomena with an effulgence that amounts to the blaze of crores of suns together. Meditate on That. This also is another form of Nirguna meditation.

Concentrate and meditate on the expansive sky. This also is another kind of Nirguna, Nirakara meditation. By the previous methods in concentration, the mind will stop thinking of finite forms. It will slowly begin to melt in the ocean of peace, as it is deprived of its contents, viz., forms of various sorts. It will become subtler and subtler also.

Benefits of Meditation

When there is deep concentration, you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and the surroundings. All the Prana will be taken up to your head.

The more the mind is fixed on God, the more the strength you will acquire. More concentration means more energy. Concentration opens the inner chambers of love or the realm of eternity. Concentration is a source of spiritual strength. Concentration is the sole key for opening the chamber of knowledge.

A Yogi who meditates regularly has a magnetic and charming personality. Those who come in contact with him are much influenced by his sweet voice, powerful speech, lustrous eyes, brilliant complexion, strong healthy body, good behaviour, virtuous qualities and divine nature. Just as a grain of salt dropped in a basin of water dissolves and becomes distributed throughout the whole water, just as the sweet fragrance of jasmine pervades the air, so also his spiritual aura infiltrates into the minds of others. People draw joy, peace and strength from him. They are inspired by his speech and get elevation of mind by mere contact with him.

Just as sweet perfume continuously emanates from an incense stick, so also the sweet perfume and divine effulgence of Brahmavarchas—magnetic Brahmic aura or Tejas—emanates continuously from the face of an aspirant who does regular constant meditation. Those who do meditation will have a calm, serene, charming face, sweet voice and lustrous bright eyes.

When you fix the mind either on Sri Krishna or Siva or Atman even for five minutes, Sattva Guna is infused into the mind. Vasanas are thinned out and Sphurana of Sankalpa becomes less and less. You will feel peace and bliss during the five minutes. You can compare this Ananda from meditation with the transitory sensual pleasure. You will find that this Ananda from meditation is a million times superior to sensual pleasure. Meditate and feel this Ananda. Then you will know its real value.

You will get the full Ananda of the divine glory only when you merge deep into silent meditation. When you are on the borderland of the divinity of God, when you are at the threshold of God, when you are in the outer skirts, you will not get the maximum peace and bliss.

Meditation develops strong and pure thoughts. Mental images are clear-cut and well-defined. Good thoughts are well grounded. Through clarification of ideas, confusion vanishes.

Many of your doubts will be cleared by themselves during meditation. You will have to wait for sometime for the clearance of some doubts. However much the teacher explains to you, you cannot understand certain things at a certain time. You will have to evolve a little more. When you will have evolved, those doubts which tormented you three years ago will become clear.

Concentrate. Meditate. Develop the power of deep thinking and concentrated thinking. Many obscure points will be rendered quite clear. You will get answers and solutions from within.

Meditation is a powerful tonic. It is a mental and nervine tonic as well. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure the diseases of the body. Those who meditate save doctors' bills. The powerful, soothing waves that arise during meditation exercise a benign influence on the mind, nerves, organs and cells of the body. The divine energy freely flows like Tailadhara from the feet of the Lord to the different systems of the Sadhaka.

You may have acute pain when you get appendicular colic or when you develop a big abscess. In sleep you experience no pain at all. When you are under chloroform also, there is no pain. Only when the mind is connected to the body, pain manifests. If you can detach or disconnect the mind from the body, there will be no pain. Atman is an embodiment of bliss. It is Ananda-ghana. If you withdraw the mind from the body and objects and fix it on the Atman through constant meditation, all pains will come to an end. Meditation is the only way which can destroy all human miseries. There is no other way.

If you wind the watch at night, it will run smoothly for twenty-four hours. Even so, if you meditate for one or two hours in the Brahmamuhurta, you can work very peacefully throughout the day. Nothing can disturb your mind. The whole system will be charged with the spiritual vibrations or divine wave.

If you can meditate for half an hour, you will be able to engage yourself with peace and spiritual strength in the battle of life for one week through the force of this meditation. Such is the beneficial result of meditation. As you have to move with different minds of peculiar natures in your daily life, get the strength and peace from meditation and you will have no trouble and worry then.

All action, whether internal or external, can be done only when the mind is united with the organs. Thought is the real action. If you have control over the mind by steady practice and if you can regulate your emotions and moods, you will not do foolish and wrong actions. Meditation will help a lot in checking various emotions and impulses.

Calm the bubbling emotions, sentiments, instincts and impulses through silent meditation. You can give a new orientation to your feelings by gradual and systematic practice. You can entirely transmute your worldly nature into divine nature. You can exercise supreme control over the nerve-centres, the nerves, muscles, the five Koshas or sheaths, and the emotions, impulses and instincts through meditation.

Meditation gives a lot of spiritual strength, peace, new vigour and vitality. It is the best mental tonic.

Things which used to upset you easily will not touch you now. Occasions which would have made you irritable do not make you so now. You have gained strength, power and endurance, power of resistance, power to deal with troubles. Certain unkind words from other people which used to torment you no longer give you the trouble now. Even if you become irritable and show signs of anger, you are able now to compose yourself quickly. These are all the signs of your gaining mental strength and will-power. Meditation brings about all these beneficial results.

The more you meditate, the more the inner spiritual life you will have, wherein the mind and Indriyas do not play. You will be very close to the Source, Atman. You will enjoy the waves of bliss and peace.

All sensual objects will have no attraction for you now. The world will appear to you as a long dream. Jnana will dawn in you by constant, deep meditation.

7

NO MEDITATION, NO REALISATION

This world is full of miseries and sufferings. If you want to get rid of the pains and afflictions of Samsara, you must practise meditation. Meditation is the pathway to Divinity. It is the royal road to the Kingdom of Brahman.

Learn the science of self-control. Possess a steady mind by constant practice of meditation. Fix your mind upon God. You will have divine life. Light will shine. There will be inflooding of all divine qualities. All negative tendencies will vanish. All conflicting forces will be reconciled. You will enjoy perfect harmony, undisturbed happiness and deep abiding peace.

Meditation is the only real, royal road to the attainment of salvation. Meditation kills all pains, sufferings and sorrow. Meditation destroys all causes of sorrow. Meditation gives the vision of unity. Meditation induces the sense of oneness. Meditation is the balloon or the aeroplane that helps the aspirant to soar high into the realms of eternal bliss, everlasting peace and undying joy.

Meditation is the royal road to attain Godhead. It is the grand trunk road which takes the aspirant direct to the destination of divine consciousness. It is the mystic ladder which takes the Yogic student from earth to heaven. It is the divine ladder of Yogins which pushes them to the heights of Asamprajnata Samadhi. It is the step in the staircase of Chidakasa to take the aspirant to the highest storey of Advaita Nishtha and Kaivalya Mukti. Without it, no spiritual progress is possible. It is the aerial ropeway that allows the devotee to glide easily into the other shore of Bhava Samadhi and drink the honey of Prema and the nectar of immortality.

Meditation is a mysterious ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, from error to truth, from darkness to light, from pain to bliss, from restlessness to abiding peace, from ignorance to knowledge, from mortality to immortality. Meditation leads to Knowledge of the Self which brings about eternal peace, supreme bliss. Meditation prepares you for the integral experience or direct intuitive knowledge.

Samanya Chaitanya and Visesha Chaitanya

In meditation or Yoga there is an indescribable power, Achintya Sakti, which takes the individual soul to the Supreme Soul. Regular meditation opens the avenues of intuitional knowledge, makes the mind calm and steady, awakens an ecstatic feeling and brings the Yogic student in contact with the Source or the Supreme Purusha. If there are doubts, they are all cleared by themselves when you march on the path of Dhyana Yoga steadily. You yourself will feel the way to place your footstep on the next rung of the spiritual ladder. A mysterious inner voice will guide you. Hear this attentively, O Yogindra!

Agni or fire is of two kinds—Samanya Agni or ordinary fire and Visesha Agni or special fire. Samanya Agni is hidden in all trees and wood. It is of no use for burning purposes. Visesha Agni that is formed by rubbing a match or rubbing two pieces of wood is useful for cooking and other purposes. Similarly, there is Samanya Chaitanya, ordinary intelligence or consciousness that is pervading everywhere. There is also Visesha Chaitanya, special intelligence. Samanya Chaitanya cannot destroy the ignorance or Avidya of men. It is only the special intelligence—Atmakara Vritti or Avichchinna Visesha Chaitanya—that can destroy the Mula Ajnana, the primitive ignorance that envelops the Svarupa or Brahman or Existence.

This special intelligence is developed when a man meditates on the Infinite with a pure heart.

In contemplation, you are in spiritual contact with the unchanging Light. You are cleansed of all the impurities. This Light cleanses the soul which touches It. The sun-glass is exposed to the light of the sun and the straws that are underneath catch fire. So, within yourself, if you have an open heart devotedly lifted up to God, the Light of His purity and love, illumining this open soul, will consume all your shortcomings in the fire of Divine Love. The Light brings enhanced energy and great comfort.

This purifying process leads to a deeper insight into Truth. This is the action of the Grace of the Lord upon the soul in meditation. In this inflowing Grace, there forthwith arises that Light of the mind into which God is sending a ray of His unclouded splendour. This Light is vastly potent.

Considerable changes take place in the mind, brain and the nervous system by the practice of meditation. New nerve currents, new vibrations, new avenues, new grooves, new cells, new channels are formed. The whole mind and the nervous system are remodelled. You will develop a new heart, a new mind, new sensations, new feelings, a new mode of thinking and acting and a new view of the universe as God in manifestation.

The fire of meditation annihilates all foulness due to vice. Then suddenly comes Knowledge or Divine Wisdom which directly leads to Mukti or final emancipation.

A Sword to Destroy Egoism

Without the help of meditation you cannot attain Knowledge of the Self. Without its aid you cannot grow into the Divine State. Without it you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind and attain immortality. If you do not practise meditation, the supreme splendour and unrivalled glories of Atman will remain hidden from you. Tear the veils that cover the Soul by practising regular meditation. Rend asunder the five sheaths that screen the Atman by constant meditation and then attain the final beatitude of life.

Truth is Brahman. Truth is Atman. Truth is quite pure and simple. You cannot realise the Truth without reflection and meditation. Be silent. Know thyself. Know That. Melt the mind in That.

Meditation is the only way for attaining immortality and eternal bliss. Those who do not concentrate and meditate are slayers of Atman—*Atmahanah*. (Isa Upanishad, Mantra 3). They are, in fact, living corpses and miserable wretches.

The wise cut asunder the knot of egoism by that sharp sword of constant meditation. Then dawns Supreme Knowledge of the Self or full inner Illumination or Self-realisation. The liberated sage has neither doubts nor delusions now. All the bonds of Karma are rent asunder. Therefore, be ever engaged in meditation. This is the master-key for opening the realms of eternal bliss. It may be tiring and disgusting in the beginning, because the mind will be running away from the point every now and then. After some practice, it will be focussed in the Centre. You will be immersed in the divine bliss.

A Common Blunder

Some medical students leave the medical college soon after joining it as they find it disgusting to wash the pus in ulcers and dissect the dead bodies. They make a serious blunder. In the beginning, it is loathing. After studying Pathology, Medicine, Operative Surgery, Morbid Anatomy and Bacteriology, the course will be very interesting in the final year. Many spiritual aspirants leave off the practice of concentration of mind after sometime as they find it difficult to practise. They also make a grave mistake like the medical students. In the beginning of practice, when you struggle to get over the body-consciousness, it will be disgusting and troublesome. It will be a physical wrestling. The emotions and Sankalpas will be abundant. In the third year of practice, the mind will be cool, pure and strong. You will derive immense joy—Ananda. The sum-total of pleasures of the whole world is nothing when compared to the Ananda derived from meditation. Do not give up the practice at any cost. Plod on. Persevere. Have Dhriti, Utsaha and Sahasa—patience, cheerfulness and tenacity. You will succeed eventually. Never despair.

Food for the Soul

Just as you require food for the body, so also, you require food for the soul in the shape of prayers, Japa, Kirtan, meditation, etc. Just as you are agitated when you do not get food in time, so also you will be agitated if you do not pray in the morning and in the evening at the proper time if you keep up the practice of prayer and Japa for sometime. Food for the soul is more essential than food for the body. Therefore, do your prayers, Japa and meditation regularly.

Just as the physical body needs food for its growth, so also the astral or subtle body requires spiritual food for its growth or evolution. If you are not regular in your Japa and meditation, the subtle body will become weak and your power of resisting the evil thoughts, Vasanas and Samskaras will be less. I think you now realise the necessity of regularity in Sadhana.

Mind feels tired after hard and protracted work. It cannot therefore be Atman. Atman is the storehouse of all powers, of Ananta-sakti. Mind is only an instrument of Atman. It should be properly disciplined. Just as you develop the physical body through gymnastics and various kinds of physical exercises, you will have to train the mind through mental culture or mental drill. In meditation and concentration, you will have to train the mind in a variety of ways. Then only the gross mind will become subtle.

Leading a virtuous life is not by itself sufficient for God-realisation. Concentration of mind is absolutely necessary. A good virtuous life only prepares the mind as a fit instrument for concentration and meditation. It is concentration and meditation that eventually leads to Self-realisation.

God is immanent in this world. He has hidden Himself in this world and is seated in the cavity of the lotus of your heart. He is an absentee landlord. You will have to seek Him through concentration and meditation with a pure mind. This is the real play of hide and seek.

All the visible things are Maya. Maya will vanish through Jnana or meditation on Atman. One should exert himself to get rid of Maya. Maya havocs through the mind. Destruction of the mind means the annihilation of Maya. Nididhyasana is the only way for conquering Maya. Lord Buddha, Raja Bhartrihari, Dattatreya, Akhow of Gujarat—all had conquered Maya and mind through deep meditation only. Enter the silence. Meditate. Meditate. Solitude and intense meditation are two important requisites for Self-realisation.

Make the mind blank. It is the only medium for these severe strokes of grief. It is difficult to suppress thought, and after it is once suppressed, a new succession of thoughts arises which overpowers the mind. Fix the mind on some tranquil object. You will succeed in checking the mind. Collect your thoughts in the Spirit as a person cools himself by going into a pool of water in the hot season. Meditate continually on Hari, who is of an azure hue and who wears an invaluable necklace and is adorned with ornaments on His arms, in His ears and on His head.

You have been given a key to unlock many of the secrets of life. That key is meditation. Meditate regularly in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. and attain eternal bliss and immortality.

8

PREREQUISITES FOR MEDITATION

For meditation, you want a properly trained instrument. You must have a calm, clear, pure, subtle, sharp, steady and one-pointed Buddhi to understand the Brahma-tattva or Brahma-vastu. Then and then only is realisation possible. Brahman is pure and subtle and you need a pure and subtle mind to approach Brahman.

Only a trained mind which utterly controls the body can inquire and meditate endlessly as long as life remains, never for a moment losing sight of the object of its search and contemplation, the Brahman, never for a moment letting it to be obscured by any terrestrial temptation. All physical activities should be completely suspended, all attachments should be ruthlessly cut asunder completely for five or six years, if you want to practise Dhyana Yoga, if you want to realise God through concentration of mind. Newspaper reading and correspondence with friends and relatives should be completely stopped as they cause distraction of mind and strengthen the world-idea. Seclusion for a period of five or six years is indispensable.

For purposes of meditation, everything must be rendered Sattvic. The place of meditation must be Sattvic. The food must be Sattvic. The wearing apparel must be Sattvic. The company must be Sattvic. Talking must be Sattvic. The sound that you hear must be Sattvic. Thinking must be Sattvic. Study must be Sattvic. Everything must be Sattvic. Then only good progress in Sadhana is possible, particularly with the beginners.

A solitary place with spiritual vibratory conditions, a cool Sattvic place with temperate climate, is indispensably requisite for concentration of mind and meditation, because the brain gets hot during meditation. The banks of sacred rivers, Himalayan scenery, lovely flower gardens, sacred temples—these are the places which elevate the mind in concentration and meditation. Have recourse to them.

Of course, the ideal condition cannot always be obtained as this is a relative plane. All places combine advantages and some disadvantages also side by side. You must select a place which has the maximum of advantages and the minimum of disadvantages. You must do the best you can. You must try to put up with some difficulties. You must overcome them. You should be alone with yourself. You should be able to abstract yourself from the distracting causes.

There must be good, Sattvic, substantial, light, nutritious food. Meditation is possible only when the mind is full of the Sattva Guna. The stomach should not be loaded. There is an intimate connection between the mind and the food. A heavy meal is harmful. Take a full meal at 11 a.m. and half a litre of milk at night. The night meal should be light for those who meditate.

There must be capacity for Sadhana. Asana steadies the body. Bandhas and Mudras make the body firm. Pranayama makes the body light. Nadi-suddhi effects Samayavastha of the mind, produces steadiness of the mind. Having acquired these qualifications, you will have to fix the mind on Brahman. Then only meditation will go on steadily with ease and happiness.

You should have perfect control over the body through regular practice of Asanas before you take up serious and constant meditation. You cannot practise meditation without a firm seat. If the body is unsteady, the mind also will become unsteady. There is intimate connection between the body and the mind. You should not shake the body even a bit. You should attain mastery over the Asana—Asana Jaya—by daily practice. You should be as firm as a statue or a rock. If you keep the body, head and neck erect, the spinal cord also will be erect, the Kundalini will rise up steadily through the Sushumna. You will not be overpowered by sleep.

Asanas pertain to the physical body. They render the body firm and steady and eradicate physical ailments. Bandhas pertain to the Prana. That which binds is a Bandha. Bandhas do not allow the Prana to move upwards and the Apana to move downwards. They bind or unite the Prana with the Apana and send the united Prana-Apana up through the Sushumna Nadi. Mudras concern the mind. They represent seals. Mudra means a seal. Mudras seal the mind with the Soul or Atman. They do not allow the mind to wander outside towards objects. They direct the externalising mind towards the Atman in the chambers of the heart and fix it there.

When the Sushumna Nadi is working, when the breath flows through both the nostrils, meditation goes on with ease and joy. The mind then is calm. There is an increase of Sattva Guna when the Sushumna is operating. Sit for meditation the moment the Sushumna begins to flow.

You can meditate only when the mind is beyond all anxieties. Retire to a quiet room or place where you do not fear interruption so that your mind may feel secure and at rest. Sit in a comfortable posture and be, as far as possible, free from external disturbing influences. Drive off negative thoughts. Become positive always. You can do nice meditation when you are positive.

Do not cause pain or suffering to any living being from greed, selfishness, irritability or annoyance. Give up anger or ill-will. Give up the spirit of fighting and heated debates. Do not argue. If you quarrel with somebody or if you have a heated debate with anybody, you cannot meditate for 3 or 4 days. Your balance of mind will be upset. Much energy will be wasted in useless channels. The blood will become hot. The nerves will be shattered. You must try your level best to keep a serene mind always. Meditation can proceed from a serene mind only. A serene mind is a valuable spiritual asset for you.

The aspirant should possess serenity. The divine light can descend only in a serene mind. Serenity is attained by the eradication of Vasanas or desires and cravings. The aspirant should be fearless also. This is the most important qualification. A timid or cowardly aspirant is very far from Self-realisation.

The arduous practice of Yoga demands an abundance of energy and nerve power on the part of the Yogic student. If one conserves the seminal energy only, he can have an abundance of energy and nerve power. Semen or vital juice tones the nerves and brain and energises the system. He who has preserved his vital force by the vow of celibacy and sublimated it into Ojas Sakti can practise steady meditation for a long period. He only can ascend the ladder of Yoga. Without Brahmacharya no iota of spiritual progress is possible. Brahmacharya is the very foundation on which the superstructure of meditation and Samadhi can be built up. Many people waste this vital energy—a great spiritual treasure indeed—when they become blind and lose their power of reason under excitement. Pitiable indeed is their lot! They cannot make any substantial progress in Yoga.

There must be firm Vairagya, burning Mumukshutva and strong Viveka in you. There must be a good spiritual teacher, an Anubhavi Guru, to guide you.

You must have an intellectual grasp, intellectual conviction and a comprehensive understanding of Brahman first through the purified mind.

Many do not get the above favourable conditions for spiritual Sadhana. That is the reason why they do not make any spiritual progress.

9

STEP BY STEP ON THE YOGA LADDER

Non-injuring, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving of gifts conducive to luxury are Yama. Internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God are Niyama.

Yama and Niyama are the foundation of Yoga. They purify the heart, Chitta and mind. They remove the cruel nature of man. Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are absolutely impossible if you have not practised Yama and Niyama. Do not try to build a superstructure without having a proper foundation.

A Pure Mind Only Can Meditate

You can never, never realise God if you have not got rid of Kamini-Kanchana, lust and desire for gold, if you are not established in mental Satya, mental Brahmacharya and mental Ahimsa. In mental Satya, the very idea of lie does not enter the mind. In mental Brahmacharya, the very idea of lust does not enter the mind. Even in dreams you must be free from lustful thoughts. It requires long practice and a careful watch over the mind. Foolish people hastily jump up to the practice of meditation in vain, without having these virtuous qualities which are very essential for spiritual Sadhana. Brahman is pure. You can realise It only if you are pure in mind and body. You can know Brahman only by becoming Brahman. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*. He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. Practise Yama-Niyama first. You will get everything.

Mental Brahmacharya is very, very important. The very idea of lust must not enter the mind. No lustful thought must form in the Antahkarana. There must be perfect chastity of thought. That is mental Brahmacharya or Manasika Brahmacharya. Evil thoughts are the beginning of adultery. Lord Jesus says: "If you cast a lustful look, you have already committed adultery in the heart". Mental actions are the real actions. Worldly persons judge a man by physical acts. God and Jnanis judge a man by the motives, by the mental actions. In mental Brahmacharya, you must not get any bad dream. There must not be the least difference in feeling when you touch a stone, a book, a tree and a woman. That is mental continence.

If you want to enter into deep meditation and Samadhi, you must have a pure heart. When the mind becomes pure, it attains the state of steadiness and becomes one-pointed. If the moral qualities are not cultivated, the means cannot lead to steadiness. Therefore, one should be well established in Sadachara if one wants to attain perfection in Yoga.

If you possess a pure heart, meditation and Samadhi will come by themselves. A pure mind that is one-pointed will move naturally towards Atman or God. Many aspirants retire into solitude without purifying their heart and practise meditation. They do not get any success through such attempts. If you want to enthrone God in your heart, you must eradicate all evil Vrittis. What do you do when you expect to receive a very high personage in your bungalow? You keep the compound quite clean and remove all the weeds and rubbish. You clean all the rooms and spread nice carpets. Similarly, you will have to remove all the dross of impurities from the mind if you want to have communion with the Lord, if you desire to call upon God earnestly to take His seat in your heart.

To practise meditation or contemplation in a mind unprepared by non-adherence to the moral precepts is like building a house on a rotten foundation. You may build up the house, but it will surely fall. You may practise meditation for many years, but you will not realise any tangible result or fruit if you have no ethical training as foundation. Mental purity, through ethical training, is of paramount importance if you wish to achieve success in meditation and Samadhi. Before you attempt to practise meditation, you must lead the necessary strict moral life. You must have the necessary right understanding. Then only you will have sanguine success in meditation. Much more time is required in the preparation of the mind for meditation than for the actual practice.

Those people who have not practised any Yogic discipline or curbing of the senses, Vrittis or impurities, will find it difficult to practise concentration and meditation. Their mind will be ever oscillating like the pendulum of a clock. Their mind will be ever roaming about like the wild bull or the monkey.

He who says and imagines, "I practise deep meditation daily", when he has not removed the evil traits or qualities or Vikaras of the mind, deceives himself first and then the others. He is a first-class confirmed hypocrite.

You will be able to enter into deep meditation only if you lead a moral life. When you have led the moral life, you may try further to build up discrimination and the other steps in your mind. You can cultivate the mind in concentration and can finally devote yourself to meditation. The more you lead the moral life, the more you meditate, the greater will be the likelihood of your entering into Nirvikalpa Samadhi which can liberate you from the round of births and deaths and can confer on you eternal bliss and immortality.

All aspirants commit mistakes now, jumping to Samadhi and Dhyana all at once as soon as they leave their houses, without caring a bit for ethical perfection. The mind remains in the same condition although they have practised meditation for fifteen years. They have the same jealousy, hatred, idea of superiority, pride and egoism.

You must have a pure mind if you want to realise the Self. Unless the mind is set free and you cast away all desires, cravings, worries, delusion, pride, lust, attachment and likes and dislikes, it cannot enter the domain of supreme peace and unalloyed felicity or the Immortal Abode.

Mind is compared to a garden. Just as you can cultivate good flowers and fruits in a garden by ploughing and manuring the land, and removing the weeds and thorns, and watering the plants and trees, so also you can cultivate the flower of devotion in the garden of your mind by removing the impurities of the mind such as lust, anger, greed, delusion and pride and watering it with divine thoughts.

When the garden is clean, when there are no weeds and thorns, you can get good fruits. So also, when the mind is pure, when the mind is free from lust, anger, etc., you can have the fruit of good deep meditation. Therefore, cleanse the mind of its impurities first. Then the current of meditation will flow by itself.

Weeds and thorns grow in the rainy season and disappear in summer; but their seeds remain underneath the ground. As soon as there is a shower, the seeds again germinate and sprout out. Even so, the Vrittis or modifications of the mind manifest on the surface of the conscious mind, then disappear and assume a subtle seed-state, the form of Samskaras. These Samskaras again become Vrittis either through internal or external stimulus.

If you want to keep a garden always clean, you will have to remove not only the weeds and thorns and other small plants, but also the seeds that lie underneath the ground which again and again germinate during the rainy season. Even so, you will have to destroy not only the big waves or Vrittis of the mind, but also the Samskaras which are the seeds for births and deaths, from which germinate the Vrittis again and again, if you want to enter into Samadhi and attain liberation or perfect freedom.

If you apply fire to green wood, it will not burn; but if you apply fire to a piece of dry wood, it will at once catch fire and burn. Even so, those who have not purified their mind will not be able to start the fire of meditation. They will start sleeping or dreaming or building castles in the air if they sit for meditation. But those who have removed the impurities of their mind by Japa, service, charity, Praṇayama, etc., will enter into deep meditation as soon as they sit for meditation. The pure ripe mind will at once burn with the fire of meditation.

It takes a long time for charcoal to catch fire, but gunpowder can be ignited within the twinkling of an eye. Even so, it takes a long time for igniting the fire of knowledge for a man whose heart is impure. But an aspirant with great purity of heart gets Knowledge of the Self within the twinkling of an eye, within the time taken to squeeze a flower by the fingers.

The Vital Importance of Pratyahara

If there are mangoes on the top of a big tree, you do not jump all at once to pluck them. It is impossible. You gradually climb up the tree by getting hold of different branches and then reach the top of the tree. Even so, you cannot jump all at once to the summit of the spiritual ladder. You will have to place your foot with caution on each rung of the ladder. You will have to practise Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana. Then only you will reach the highest rung of the ladder of Yoga, viz., Samadhi. If you are a student of Vedanta, you will have to equip yourself with the Four Means. Then you will have to do Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. Then only you will attain Brahma Sakshatkara.

A certain doctor neglected to properly study physiology, which treats of the functions of the various viscera or internal organs of the body. As he neglected physiology, he was not able to understand pathology, which is physiology in disease. He neglected to learn pathology properly. He was not able to understand diagnosis through which he can differentiate various diseases. He neglected to study carefully the differential diagnosis and medicine. He was not able to treat properly.

So, if you want to treat a case properly, you must know diagnosis and medicine well. If you want to diagnose well, you must know pathology properly. If you want to know pathology, you must know physiology well.

Likewise, if you want Samadhi, you must know well the process of Dhyana. If you want Dhyana, you must know accurately the method of Dharana—concentration. If you want Dharana, you must know perfectly the method of Pratyahara or abstraction. If you want Pratyahara, you must know Pranayama. If you want Pranayama, you must know Asana well. Before going into the practice of Asana, you should practise Yama and Niyama. There is no use of jumping into Dhyana without having the various preliminary practices. You will be in the same position as that of the miserable doctor who was not able to diagnose and treat a case properly owing to his neglect of the study of physiology, pathology and medicine.

The Yogic student should practise Pratyahara after getting some success in the practice of Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama. Pratyahara is abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from their objects. The senses are held in check by this practice. That Yogic student who jumps at once to the practice of meditation without practising abstraction is a deluded soul. He will have no success in contemplation. Pratyahara checks the outgoing tendencies of the senses. It puts a break, as it were, on the senses. Pratyahara follows automatically the practice of Pranayama. When the life-force is controlled by regulation or restraint of the breath, the senses become thinned out. They are starved to death. They get emaciated. They cannot hiss now when they come in contact with their objects.

The aspirant can take up the practice of meditation after he is well up in Pratyahara and concentration. If the Indriyas are turbulent, if the mind cannot be fixed on one point, no meditation is possible even within hundreds of years. One should go stage by stage and step by step. The mind should be withdrawn again and again to the point when it runs. One should reduce his wants and renounce all sorts of wild, vain desires of the mind. A desireless man only can sit quiet and practise meditation.

Pratyahara is a trying discipline indeed. It is disgusting in the beginning, but later on it becomes very interesting. You will feel inner strength. It demands considerable patience and perseverance. It will give you tremendous power. You will develop immense will-power. During the course of practice, the senses will run again and again like a wild bull towards objects. You will have to withdraw them again and again and fix them on the Lakshya or the point. That Yogi who is well-established in Pratyahara can meditate quite calmly even in the battle-field where countless machine-guns roar in continuous stream.

You should practise withdrawal of the Indriyas one by one. Deal with the most turbulent sense first. Practise Pratyahara of that particular sense to start with. Then you can take up another Indriya. If you try to manipulate all the Indriyas at a time, you will gain no success. The task will be an uphill work. You will feel quite exhausted.

Partial success in the practice of Pratyahara will not help the Yogic student much. If Vairagya wanes, and if there is slackness in the practice, the senses may again become turbulent.

If you can consciously do Pratyahara at will, consciously attaching and detaching the mind to and from the senses, you have gained really a great control over the mind. You can check at any time the outgoing tendencies or outgoing forces of the mind. Pratyahara is the stepping stone to inner spiritual life. He who has succeeded in Pratyahara can concentrate his mind quite readily for a very long time. Dharana and Dhyana come automatically if Pratyahara is perfect. An aspirant has to struggle hard to have mastery over Pratyahara. Perfect Vairagya is indispensable for success in Pratyahara. You can succeed after strenuous and incessant struggle for some years. *Tatah Parama Vasyatendriyanam*. Thence arises the supreme control of the organs. (Yoga Sutras, II-55).

During the period of Sadhana, do not mix much; do not talk much; do not walk much; do not eat much; do not sleep much. Observe carefully the five 'do-not's. Mixing will cause disturbances in the mind. Talking much will cause distraction of the mind. Walking much causes exhaustion and weakness. Eating much induces Alasya and Tandri, laziness and sleepiness.

Success in Pratyahara depends upon the strength of past Yogic Samskaras which the Yogic student possesses. He who has practised Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara in his previous births to some extent will have success in Pratyahara within a short time in this birth. A beginner who attempts to practise Yoga for the first time in this birth, who has no previous Samskaras of past births to his credit, may take a pretty long time to achieve some definite positive realisation in Pratyahara. One can himself feel whether he is a new practitioner in Yoga or an old Yogic student or Yoga Brashta from his own experiences and the degree of success in his practice in this birth.

10

PLACES FAVOURABLE FOR MEDITATION

> *"One should perform his Yogic meditation*
> *in a level place, free from pebbles,*
> *fire, wind, dust, dampness and disturbing*
> *noises, where the scenery is charming and*
> *pleasing to the eyes, and where there*
> *are bowers, caves and good water places*
> *which help the practice of concentration."*
>
> (Svetasvataropanishad, 11-10)

The world will not suit you for meditation. There are many disturbing causes. The environments are not elevating. Your friends are your worst enemies. They take away all your time through vain talks. It is inevitable. You are puzzled. You are worried. Then you try to get out of the environments. To save time, money and wanderings, I shall mention some good places. You can select one of these places. The place must be of a temperate climate and must suit you during summer, the rainy season and winter. You must stick to one place for three years with firm determination.

You can hardly get a place that can satisfy you from all viewpoints. It is an impossibility. You must not shift when you get some inconvenience. You must put up with it. There is no use in frequent wanderings. It is only those who have preponderating Vishaya Samskaras that flutter about from Brindavan to Benares, from Benares to Jagannath Puri, like the wild butterfly.

Do not compare one place with another. Maya tempts you in various ways. Use your Viveka and reason. Mussorie will appear to you most charming when you are at Shimla. Shimla will appear more delightful when you are at Mussorie. Everything is relative in this world. Do not believe the mind and senses any more. Enough, enough of their tricks. No more. No more. Be on the watch to guard yourself from sense deceptions and temptations.

First I suggest Rishikesh and Swargashram. They are wonderful places for meditation. They are admirably adapted. The charm and spiritual influence are simply marvellous. You can put up your cottage. Brahmapuri, Garuda Chatty and Nilakanth near Rishikesh are other nice places. Uttarkashi has beautiful, spiritual vibratory conditions. You can stay in a solitary place called Lakshesvar.

Solitary places like Swargashram, Rishikesh and Uttarkashi have a beautiful charm of their own. It is indescribable. It is to be felt and understood by the subtle Nididhyasana Buddhi. A gross, worldly practical Buddhi can never discriminate and understand the beauty and peace of such remarkable places, the supreme abodes of sages and Rishis. The spiritual vibratory conditions that are present in these places can, by themselves, take a man to Samadhi without any effort. The Himalayan vibrations, soothing and soul-elevating, and the influence of the holy Ganga can turn an inveterate atheist and materialist into a staunch believer. Live for three months in these places. Realise the charm, grandeur and benign influence of solitude.

An aspirant who meditates in a solitary upstairs room in a town will have as much quiet there as in a forest. But he will not have the congenial spiritual vibrations there as in Rishikesh, Uttarkashi or Gangotri. Vibrations play a vital part in the elevation of mind and in producing Ekagrata of mind. In these holy places, the vibrations of Rishis are lodged in the ethereal space and the aspirants are highly benefited by these vibrations. Vairagya, Sattvic Bhava and the meditative mood come by themselves without effort or struggle in these holy places. Some ladies got down from the train at Rishikesh station. The moment they saw the Himalayas, they uttered: "Who is son? Who is father? Everything is Maya. Everything is false". Such is the powerful influence of vibrations on the mind. It is only sages and Yogins who can know at once the nature of vibrations in a place and their suitability for meditation.

Almora and Nainital are also good. Any village on the banks of the Ganga, the Narmada and the Yamuna is beautiful. Kulu valley and Chamba valley in Kashmir are quite suitable.

Lakshmanjhula is another good place. There is ample space for erection of new cottages. Brahmavarta, near Kanpur, is a suitable place. There are many good places seven miles beyond Mathura on the banks of the Yamuna.

Mount Abu is a beautiful cool place. Cool places are needed for meditation. The brain gets tired very soon in a hot place. In a cool place, you can meditate all the twenty-four hours. You will not feel exhaustion. The Maharajas of Alwar and Limbdi have built nice caves in Mount Abu and arranged food and other conveniences for good, educated Sadhus.

Mussorie, Darjeeling, Shimla, Ooty, Kodaikanal and all hill stations are cool places. They have beautiful scenery also. But they are Rajasic centres. They have no elevating spiritual vibrations. People go there for enjoyment and taint the atmosphere. Hence they are not suitable for meditation.

You must have some conveniences also such as a library, medical aid and a railway station in the beginning. You must be able to get some fruits and milk. Otherwise it will be difficult to continue your Sadhana in one place for a long time. When you are advanced in Sadhana, when you go above body-consciousness, you can remain in any place.

Solitude for Sadhana, a Great Desideratum

Ekanath, Raja Janaka and others realised by doing spiritual Sadhana while remaining in the world. Ekanath lived in the world with wife and children, practised devotional Yoga and attained Sayujya. Raja Janaka ruled over Mithila and attained Jnana amidst royal activities. Swami Vidyaranya, the author of the reputed Panchadasi, was the Dewan of Vijayanagaram. He worked as the Dewan of the State, practised meditation and realised by remaining in the world. The central teaching of the Gita is to realise in and through the world.

Sri Tilak and Sri Aurobindo have strongly preached this doctrine. The obstacles to Yoga are not from outside but from within. If you have succeeded in perfect Pratyahara, you can remain wherever you like. This is all true, doubtless. But just hear the other part of the story. Do not be one-sided. Look to the other side of the shield.

This is plausible, sounds alright, but not feasible in the vast majority. It is easier said than done. How many Janakas and Ekanaths have you had? These people were really Yoga Brashtas. It is absolutely impossible for the vast majority.

Lord Jesus was missing for 18 years. Buddha went into seclusion for 8 years in the Uruvala forest. Swami Rama Tirtha was a recluse in the Brahmapuri forest for 2 years. Sri Aurobindo preached realisation amidst activity, but had shut himself in a closed room for many years. Many had taken up seclusion during Sadhana period. You can make a beginning in the world, but when you have made some progress, you must shift yourself up for advanced practices to a suitable place where you will find spiritual vibrations and solitude. If you have once tasted properly to the very depth the happiness of solitude, you will never leave it at any cost.

As the will-power in many persons has become very weak, as they have had no religious discipline or training in schools and colleges when they were young, as they are under the sway of materialistic influences, it is necessary for them to go in for seclusion for some weeks, months or years to practise rigorous Japa and undisturbed meditation. In the world, the environments are quite unfavourable for Sadhana and meditation. They excite, ignite and kindle the nerves, Samskaras, desires and the senses.

Those who have fixed up their sons in life, who have retired from service, and those who have no ties or attachment in the world, can remain in seclusion for 4 or 5 years and practise intense meditation and Tapas for purification and Self-realisation. This is like entering a university for higher studies or a post-graduate course. When the Tapas is over, when they have attained Self-knowledge, they should come out and share their knowledge and bliss with others. They should disseminate knowledge of the Self through lectures, conversations, discourses or heart-to-heart talks according to their capacity and disposition.

If you want to retire into solitude for the practice of meditation, if you are a householder with spiritual thirsting for intense Sadhana, you cannot all on a sudden sever your connection with your family people. Sudden severance from worldly ties and possessions will give you intense mental agony and induce shock in your family people. You will have to break the ties gradually. Stay in seclusion for a week or a month to begin with. Then gradually prolong the period. Then they will not feel the pangs of separation.

He who has reduced his wants, who has not a bit of attraction for the world, who has discrimination and dispassion, who has burning yearning for liberation, who has observed Mauna for months together, will be able to live in seclusion.

The aspirant should be free from hope, desire and greed. Then only he will have a steady mind. Hope, desire and greed make the mind ever restless and turbulent; they are the enemies of peace and Self-knowledge. The aspirant should not have too many possessions also. He can keep only those articles which are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his body. If there are too many possessions, the mind will be ever thinking of the articles and attempting to protect them. Those who want quick progress in meditation during seclusion should not keep any connection with the world by way of correspondence, reading newspapers, thinking of the family members or thinking of their possessions.

When you go in for seclusion for intense Tapas and meditation or when you practise intense meditation in a quiet room, do not bother much about your shaving. Let the hair grow. These mechanical thoughts such as thoughts of shaving will produce great distraction in your mind and interfere with the continuity of divine thoughts. Do not think much of the body, bread and clothing. Think more of God or Atman.

The aspirant need not bother about his bodily wants. Everything is provided for by God. Everything is prearranged by Mother Prakriti. She looks after the bodily wants of all very carefully in a more efficient manner than they themselves would do. Prakriti knows in a better manner what the requirements are and provides them then and there. Understand the mysterious ways of Mother and become wise. Be grateful to Her for Her unique kindness, grace and mercy.

When young aspirants take to absolute solitude and silence, they will have to face boldly three obstacles, viz., depression, building castles in the air and hatred for householders, men and women. They become misanthropes. They should entertain cheerful thoughts. Watch the mind very often and radiate pure love for all.

The theory of Ajati Vada has made several of our young men retire into forests for contemplative life aimlessly. They have not properly understood the Vedanta philosophy and the rationale of meditation. They have ignored the world totally on the ground that it is absolutely non-existent. They have neglected the proper maintenance of the physical body also. Meditation is a very difficult process. It is only those who are able to meditate for twenty-four hours who can take to absolute seclusion for a long time. A novice can hardly keep the mind fully occupied during seclusion. He does not know how to handle the mind and fix it properly in the Lakshya. All the physical neglect of the body leads to gradual debility. In the long run, owing to debility and mental lethargy consequent on the irrational seclusion, many Sannyasins become Tamasic and this Tamas is mistaken for Sattva. They become absolutely useless both for themselves and for the world. All possible care should be taken to keep the body in a healthy condition. A Sadhaka should take more care of the body than a worldly man, because it is with this instrument that he has to reach the goal. At the same time, he should be quite unattached to the body and be prepared to give it up at any moment. That is the proper ideal. When he finds that after some years of seclusion he has made no improvement and that he is passing into Tamas, he should come up to the world and combine both congenial action and meditation. He can evolve through activity, but Tamas will totally annihilate spiritual growth.

The Suitability of Cave Life

Cave life is extremely good. The ancient Rishis and seers of India lived in the caves of the Himalayas and did rigorous Tapascharya. The temperature is quite even in caves. Caves are very cooling. The heat of scorching summer cannot penetrate inside the cave. It is quite warm in winter. All external sounds are shut out in a cave. You can have very beautiful uninterrupted meditation. There is solitude in caves. The spiritual currents are elevating. There is no mundane atmosphere there, because modern civilisation has not penetrated there. Such are the advantages of cave life.

There is the beautiful Vasishtha Guha in the Himalayas, fourteen miles away from Rishikesh. Maharshi Vasishtha did Tapas here. Hence the name "Vasishtha Guha". 'Guha' means a cave. You can get milk from the neighbouring villages. Bamrughi Guha, near Tehri, Himalayas, is another good cave. There are caves near Nilakanth Hills, six miles from Rishikesh.

Cave life is not suitable for aspirants who have had modern education, who have a delicate constitution and who are timid. It is meant for aspirants who have a strong sturdy frame, who are fearless and who have intense power of endurance. Those who have some Divya Siddhis can live in caves. Those who have a good knowledge of the Butis or Himalayan herbs, who have strengthened the body by means of special Kayakalpa, who have a body which is proof against bites of poisonous insects or creatures by taking a course of Nim Kalpa or purified *nux vomica*, those who have Mantra Siddhi, who have control over wild animals, who can bear heat and cold, hunger and thirst, those who have lost all attraction for the world, the sense objects and work of any kind, who can meditate for a long time, who have internal dispassion—they can remain in a cave.

Some young raw aspirants with weak body and indifferent health, in whom a ray of Viveka and dispassion has recently dawned through the study of some religious books, through some mishap or some difficulties in life, run to the Himalayan caves without any previous preparation or bodily and mental discipline. Just as the mercury in the thermometer runs to 106 degrees in high fever, so also, juvenile bubbling emotion runs to

112 degrees to the crown of the head. It cools down quickly. They find it difficult to pull on there and leave the place in a few days. For some, cave life is not suitable. They develop some sort of skin disease and pale-bloodedness owing to lack of ventilation.

There is another disadvantage in cave life. He who lives in a cave for a long time becomes Tamasic. He is unable to do any kind of work. He cannot mix with people. He is terribly afraid of a multitude of people. His mind gets distracted soon if he is in the company of a few persons, if he hears a little noise. This is not balanced life. This is one-sided development. He who dwells in the cave must be able to keep his balance even when he comes to a busy town. This is the sign of spiritual growth.

If the senses are turbulent, if you have not got the power to withdraw the senses, you will have no peace of mind even in a solitary cave in the Himalayas. A disciplined Yogi who has controlled his senses and the mind can enjoy peace of mind in a solitary cave. A passionate man who has not controlled the senses and the mind will be only building castles in the air if he lives in a solitary cave in the mountains.

You may be living in a solitary cave in the Himalayas. You may be practising meditation. If the memory of your past experiences in the plains comes, if you allow the mind to dwell on it again and again, you are actually living in the plains only, though your abode is in the solitary retreats of the Himalayas. Further you do not lead the perfect divine life in the cave, because you lead the past worldly life again subjectively in the sacred cave. Thought is the real action.

The aspirant or Yogi in the cave in the Himalayas thinks that he is very much advanced in spirituality. He looks with contempt at his brother who is plodding to reach the goal through untiring selfless service and meditation combined. The former may be rich in Vairagya and Titiksha. He may be proficient in the study of scriptures. He may be able to bear cold. He may be able to live on bread and Dhal alone. He may be able to sit on one Asana at a stretch for a longer time. But he may be lacking in mercy, cosmic love, broad tolerance, generosity, courage, etc. He may not be able to bear heat, he may complain of strong Vikshepa, he may not be able to keep up a balanced mind when he comes to the plains. Whereas, the latter may possess his own special virtues and balanced mind and may excel even the Yogi of the Himalayas in many respects. One should have excellence in all virtues. Then only he will become a perfect sage. Equanimity is Yoga.

How can sense control be tested in a lonely forest where there are no temptations? The Yogic student of the cave should test himself after growing sufficiently by entering the plains. But he should not test himself every now and then like the man who removed the young plant daily after watering to see if it had struck deep root or not.

Artificial caves with good ventilation can be built underneath the ground in any solitary place, even in your own compound or village. Two walls with a hollow in the middle, and pipes to bring in cool air and take away hot air, will keep the cave quite cool. All real aspirants who remain in the world should build one for their meditation. They will be immensely benefited.

The real snug, well-furnished, marvellous, awe-inspiring cave is in your heart. It is the Hridaya Guha of the Upanishads wherein Dattatreya, Sankara and Yajnavalkya dwelt in days of yore. Even now, modern Rishis and sages abide there, withdrawing the outgoing senses and mind. They drink the nectar of immortality there and remain ever blissful.

May you all dwell in this mysterious, magnificent cave in the heart alone in communion with your Inner Self, the secondless Brahman or the Absolute, the Goal, the Sole Refuge of all.

vades the air, so also his spiritual aura infiltrates into the minds of others. People draw joy, peace and strength from him. They are inspired by his speech and get elevation of mind by mere contact with him.

Just as sweet perfume continuously emanates from an incense stick, so also the sweet perfume and divine effulgence of Brahmavarchas—magnetic Brahmic aura or Tejas—emanates continuously from the face of an aspirant who does regular constant meditation. Those who do meditation will have a calm, serene, charming face, sweet voice and lustrous bright eyes.

When you fix the mind either on Sri Krishna or Siva or Atman even for five minutes, Sattva Guna is infused into the mind. Vasanas are thinned out and Sphurana of Sankalpa becomes less and less. You will feel peace and bliss during the five minutes. You can compare this Ananda from meditation with the transitory sensual pleasure. You will find that this Ananda from meditation is a million times superior to sensual pleasure. Meditate and feel this Ananda. Then you will know its real value.

You will get the full Ananda of the divine glory only when you merge deep into silent meditation. When you are on the borderland of the divinity of God, when you are at the threshold of God, when you are in the outer skirts, you will not get the maximum peace and bliss.

Meditation develops strong and pure thoughts. Mental images are clear-cut and well-defined. Good thoughts are well grounded. Through clarification of ideas, confusion vanishes.

Many of your doubts will be cleared by themselves during meditation. You will have to wait for sometime for the clearance of some doubts. However much the teacher explains to you, you cannot understand certain things at a certain time. You will have to evolve a little more. When you will have evolved, those doubts which tormented you three years ago will become clear.

Concentrate. Meditate. Develop the power of deep thinking and concentrated thinking. Many obscure points will be rendered quite clear. You will get answers and solutions from within.

Meditation is a powerful tonic. It is a mental and nervine tonic as well. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure the diseases of the body. Those who meditate save doctors' bills. The powerful, soothing waves that arise during meditation exercise a benign influence on the mind, nerves, organs and cells of the body. The divine energy freely flows like Tailadhara from the feet of the Lord to the different systems of the Sadhaka.

You may have acute pain when you get appendicular colic or when you develop a big abscess. In sleep you experience no pain at all. When you are under chloroform also, there is no pain. Only when the mind is connected to the body, pain manifests. If you can detach or disconnect the mind from the body, there will be no pain. Atman is an embodiment of bliss. It is Ananda-ghana. If you withdraw the mind from the body and objects and fix it on the Atman through constant meditation, all pains will come to an end. Meditation is the only way which can destroy all human miseries. There is no other way.

If you wind the watch at night, it will run smoothly for twenty-four hours. Even so, if you meditate for one or two hours in the Brahmamuhurta, you can work very peacefully throughout the day. Nothing can disturb your mind. The whole system will be charged with the spiritual vibrations or divine wave.

If you can meditate for half an hour, you will be able to engage yourself with peace and spiritual strength in the battle of life for one week through the force of this meditation. Such is the beneficial result of meditation. As you have to move with different minds of peculiar natures in your daily life, get the strength and peace from meditation and you will have no trouble and worry then.

All action, whether internal or external, can be done only when the mind is united with the organs. Thought is the real action. If you have control over the mind by steady practice and if you can regulate your emotions and moods, you will not do foolish and wrong actions. Meditation will help a lot in checking various emotions and impulses.

Calm the bubbling emotions, sentiments, instincts and impulses through silent meditation. You can give a new orientation to your feelings by gradual and systematic practice. You can entirely transmute your worldly nature into divine nature. You can exercise supreme control over the nerve-centres, the nerves, muscles, the five Koshas or sheaths, and the emotions, impulses and instincts through meditation.

Meditation gives a lot of spiritual strength, peace, new vigour and vitality. It is the best mental tonic.

Things which used to upset you easily will not touch you now. Occasions which would have made you irritable do not make you so now. You have gained strength, power and endurance, power of resistance, power to deal with troubles. Certain unkind words from other people which used to torment you no longer give you the trouble now. Even if you become irritable and show signs of anger, you are able now to compose yourself quickly. These are all the signs of your gaining mental strength and will-power. Meditation brings about all these beneficial results.

The more you meditate, the more the inner spiritual life you will have, wherein the mind and Indriyas do not play. You will be very close to the Source, Atman. You will enjoy the waves of bliss and peace.

All sensual objects will have no attraction for you now. The world will appear to you as a long dream. Jnana will dawn in you by constant, deep meditation.

7

NO MEDITATION, NO REALISATION

This world is full of miseries and sufferings. If you want to get rid of the pains and afflictions of Samsara, you must practise meditation. Meditation is the pathway to Divinity. It is the royal road to the Kingdom of Brahman.

Learn the science of self-control. Possess a steady mind by constant practice of meditation. Fix your mind upon God. You will have divine life. Light will shine. There will be inflooding of all divine qualities. All negative tendencies will vanish. All conflicting forces will be reconciled. You will enjoy perfect harmony, undisturbed happiness and deep abiding peace.

Meditation is the only real, royal road to the attainment of salvation. Meditation kills all pains, sufferings and sorrow. Meditation destroys all causes of sorrow. Meditation gives the vision of unity. Meditation induces the sense of oneness. Meditation is the balloon or the aeroplane that helps the aspirant to soar high into the realms of eternal bliss, everlasting peace and undying joy.

Meditation is the royal road to attain Godhead. It is the grand trunk road which takes the aspirant direct to the destination of divine consciousness. It is the mystic ladder which takes the Yogic student from earth to heaven. It is the divine ladder of Yogins which pushes them to the heights of Asamprajnata Samadhi. It is the step in the staircase of Chidakasa to take the aspirant to the highest storey of Advaita Nishtha and Kaivalya Mukti. Without it, no spiritual progress is possible. It is the aerial ropeway that allows the devotee to glide easily into the other shore of Bhava Samadhi and drink the honey of Prema and the nectar of immortality.

Meditation is a mysterious ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, from error to truth, from darkness to light, from pain to bliss, from restlessness to abiding peace, from ignorance to knowledge, from mortality to immortality. Meditation leads to Knowledge of the Self which brings about eternal peace, supreme bliss. Meditation prepares you for the integral experience or direct intuitive knowledge.

Samanya Chaitanya and Visesha Chaitanya

In meditation or Yoga there is an indescribable power, Achintya Sakti, which takes the individual soul to the Supreme Soul. Regular meditation opens the avenues of intuitional knowledge, makes the mind calm and steady, awakens an ecstatic feeling and brings the Yogic student in contact with the Source or the Supreme Purusha. If there are doubts, they are all cleared by themselves when you march on the path of Dhyana Yoga steadily. You yourself will feel the way to place your footstep on the next rung of the spiritual ladder. A mysterious inner voice will guide you. Hear this attentively, O Yogindra!

Agni or fire is of two kinds—Samanya Agni or ordinary fire and Visesha Agni or special fire. Samanya Agni is hidden in all trees and wood. It is of no use for burning purposes. Visesha Agni that is formed by rubbing a match or rubbing two pieces of wood is useful for cooking and other purposes. Similarly, there is Samanya Chaitanya, ordinary intelligence or consciousness that is pervading everywhere. There is also Visesha Chaitanya, special intelligence. Samanya Chaitanya cannot destroy the ignorance or Avidya of men. It is only the special intelligence—Atmakara Vritti or Avichchinna Visesha Chaitanya—that can destroy the Mula Ajnana, the primitive ignorance that envelops the Svarupa or Brahman or Existence.

This special intelligence is developed when a man meditates on the Infinite with a pure heart.

In contemplation, you are in spiritual contact with the unchanging Light. You are cleansed of all the impurities. This Light cleanses the soul which touches It. The sun-glass is exposed to the light of the sun and the straws that are underneath catch fire. So, within yourself, if you have an open heart devotedly lifted up to God, the Light of His purity and love, illumining this open soul, will consume all your shortcomings in the fire of Divine Love. The Light brings enhanced energy and great comfort.

This purifying process leads to a deeper insight into Truth. This is the action of the Grace of the Lord upon the soul in meditation. In this inflowing Grace, there forthwith arises that Light of the mind into which God is sending a ray of His unclouded splendour. This Light is vastly potent.

Considerable changes take place in the mind, brain and the nervous system by the practice of meditation. New nerve currents, new vibrations, new avenues, new grooves, new cells, new channels are formed. The whole mind and the nervous system are remodelled. You will develop a new heart, a new mind, new sensations, new feelings, a new mode of thinking and acting and a new view of the universe as God in manifestation.

The fire of meditation annihilates all foulness due to vice. Then suddenly comes Knowledge or Divine Wisdom which directly leads to Mukti or final emancipation.

A Sword to Destroy Egoism

Without the help of meditation you cannot attain Knowledge of the Self. Without its aid you cannot grow into the Divine State. Without it you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind and attain immortality. If you do not practise meditation, the supreme splendour and unrivalled glories of Atman will remain hidden from you. Tear the veils that cover the Soul by practising regular meditation. Rend asunder the five sheaths that screen the Atman by constant meditation and then attain the final beatitude of life.

Truth is Brahman. Truth is Atman. Truth is quite pure and simple. You cannot realise the Truth without reflection and meditation. Be silent. Know thyself. Know That. Melt the mind in That.

Meditation is the only way for attaining immortality and eternal bliss. Those who do not concentrate and meditate are slayers of Atman—*Atmahanah*. (Isa Upanishad, Mantra 3). They are, in fact, living corpses and miserable wretches.

The wise cut asunder the knot of egoism by that sharp sword of constant meditation. Then dawns Supreme Knowledge of the Self or full inner Illumination or Self-realisation. The liberated sage has neither doubts nor delusions now. All the bonds of Karma are rent asunder. Therefore, be ever engaged in meditation. This is the master-key for opening the realms of eternal bliss. It may be tiring and disgusting in the beginning, because the mind will be running away from the point every now and then. After some practice, it will be focussed in the Centre. You will be immersed in the divine bliss.

A Common Blunder

Some medical students leave the medical college soon after joining it as they find it disgusting to wash the pus in ulcers and dissect the dead bodies. They make a serious blunder. In the beginning, it is loathing. After studying Pathology, Medicine, Operative Surgery, Morbid Anatomy and Bacteriology, the course will be very interesting in the final year. Many spiritual aspirants leave off the practice of concentration of mind after sometime as they find it difficult to practise. They also make a grave mistake like the medical students. In the beginning of practice, when you struggle to get over the body-consciousness, it will be disgusting and troublesome. It will be a physical wrestling. The emotions and Sankalpas will be abundant. In the third year of practice, the mind will be cool, pure and strong. You will derive immense joy—Ananda. The sum-total of pleasures of the whole world is nothing when compared to the Ananda derived from meditation. Do not give up the practice at any cost. Plod on. Persevere. Have Dhriti, Utsaha and Sahasa—patience, cheerfulness and tenacity. You will succeed eventually. Never despair.

Food for the Soul

Just as you require food for the body, so also, you require food for the soul in the shape of prayers, Japa, Kirtan, meditation, etc. Just as you are agitated when you do not get food in time, so also you will be agitated if you do not pray in the morning and in the evening at the proper time if you keep up the practice of prayer and Japa for sometime. Food for the soul is more essential than food for the body. Therefore, do your prayers, Japa and meditation regularly.

Just as the physical body needs food for its growth, so also the astral or subtle body requires spiritual food for its growth or evolution. If you are not regular in your Japa and meditation, the subtle body will become weak and your power of resisting the evil thoughts, Vasanas and Samskaras will be less. I think you now realise the necessity of regularity in Sadhana.

Mind feels tired after hard and protracted work. It cannot therefore be Atman. Atman is the storehouse of all powers, of Ananta-sakti. Mind is only an instrument of Atman. It should be properly disciplined. Just as you develop the physical body through gymnastics and various kinds of physical exercises, you will have to train the mind through mental culture or mental drill. In meditation and concentration, you will have to train the mind in a variety of ways. Then only the gross mind will become subtle.

Leading a virtuous life is not by itself sufficient for God-realisation. Concentration of mind is absolutely necessary. A good virtuous life only prepares the mind as a fit instrument for concentration and meditation. It is concentration and meditation that eventually leads to Self-realisation.

God is immanent in this world. He has hidden Himself in this world and is seated in the cavity of the lotus of your heart. He is an absentee landlord. You will have to seek Him through concentration and meditation with a pure mind. This is the real play of hide and seek.

All the visible things are Maya. Maya will vanish through Jnana or meditation on Atman. One should exert himself to get rid of Maya. Maya havocs through the mind. Destruction of the mind means the annihilation of Maya. Nididhyasana is the only way for conquering Maya. Lord Buddha, Raja Bhartrihari, Dattatreya, Akhow of Gujarat—all had conquered Maya and mind through deep meditation only. Enter the silence. Meditate. Meditate. Solitude and intense meditation are two important requisites for Self-realisation.

Make the mind blank. It is the only medium for these severe strokes of grief. It is difficult to suppress thought, and after it is once suppressed, a new succession of thoughts arises which overpowers the mind. Fix the mind on some tranquil object. You will succeed in checking the mind. Collect your thoughts in the Spirit as a person cools himself by going into a pool of water in the hot season. Meditate continually on Hari, who is of an azure hue and who wears an invaluable necklace and is adorned with ornaments on His arms, in His ears and on His head.

You have been given a key to unlock many of the secrets of life. That key is meditation. Meditate regularly in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. and attain eternal bliss and immortality.

8

PREREQUISITES FOR MEDITATION

For meditation, you want a properly trained instrument. You must have a calm, clear, pure, subtle, sharp, steady and one-pointed Buddhi to understand the Brahma-tattva or Brahma-vastu. Then and then only is realisation possible. Brahman is pure and subtle and you need a pure and subtle mind to approach Brahman.

Only a trained mind which utterly controls the body can inquire and meditate endlessly as long as life remains, never for a moment losing sight of the object of its search and contemplation, the Brahman, never for a moment letting it to be obscured by any terrestrial temptation. All physical activities should be completely suspended, all attachments should be ruthlessly cut asunder completely for five or six years, if you want to practise Dhyana Yoga, if you want to realise God through concentration of mind. Newspaper reading and correspondence with friends and relatives should be completely stopped as they cause distraction of mind and strengthen the world-idea. Seclusion for a period of five or six years is indispensable.

For purposes of meditation, everything must be rendered Sattvic. The place of meditation must be Sattvic. The food must be Sattvic. The wearing apparel must be Sattvic. The company must be Sattvic. Talking must be Sattvic. The sound that you hear must be Sattvic. Thinking must be Sattvic. Study must be Sattvic. Everything must be Sattvic. Then only good progress in Sadhana is possible, particularly with the beginners.

A solitary place with spiritual vibratory conditions, a cool Sattvic place with temperate climate, is indispensably requisite for concentration of mind and meditation, because the brain gets hot during meditation. The banks of sacred rivers, Himalayan scenery, lovely flower gardens, sacred temples—these are the places which elevate the mind in concentration and meditation. Have recourse to them.

Of course, the ideal condition cannot always be obtained as this is a relative plane. All places combine advantages and some disadvantages also side by side. You must select a place which has the maximum of advantages and the minimum of disadvantages. You must do the best you can. You must try to put up with some difficulties. You must overcome them. You should be alone with yourself. You should be able to abstract yourself from the distracting causes.

There must be good, Sattvic, substantial, light, nutritious food. Meditation is possible only when the mind is full of the Sattva Guna. The stomach should not be loaded. There is an intimate connection between the mind and the food. A heavy meal is harmful. Take a full meal at 11 a.m. and half a litre of milk at night. The night meal should be light for those who meditate.

There must be capacity for Sadhana. Asana steadies the body. Bandhas and Mudras make the body firm. Pranayama makes the body light. Nadi-suddhi effects Samayavastha of the mind, produces steadiness of the mind. Having acquired these qualifications, you will have to fix the mind on Brahman. Then only meditation will go on steadily with ease and happiness.

You should have perfect control over the body through regular practice of Asanas before you take up serious and constant meditation. You cannot practise meditation without a firm seat. If the body is unsteady, the mind also will become unsteady. There is intimate connection between the body and the mind. You should not shake the body even a bit. You should attain mastery over the Asana—Asana Jaya—by daily practice. You should be as firm as a statue or a rock. If you keep the body, head and neck erect, the spinal cord also will be erect, the Kundalini will rise up steadily through the Sushumna. You will not be overpowered by sleep.

Asanas pertain to the physical body. They render the body firm and steady and eradicate physical ailments. Bandhas pertain to the Prana. That which binds is a Bandha. Bandhas do not allow the Prana to move upwards and the Apana to move downwards. They bind or unite the Prana with the Apana and send the united Prana-Apana up through the Sushumna Nadi. Mudras concern the mind. They represent seals. Mudra means a seal. Mudras seal the mind with the Soul or Atman. They do not allow the mind to wander outside towards objects. They direct the externalising mind towards the Atman in the chambers of the heart and fix it there.

When the Sushumna Nadi is working, when the breath flows through both the nostrils, meditation goes on with ease and joy. The mind then is calm. There is an increase of Sattva Guna when the Sushumna is operating. Sit for meditation the moment the Sushumna begins to flow.

You can meditate only when the mind is beyond all anxieties. Retire to a quiet room or place where you do not fear interruption so that your mind may feel secure and at rest. Sit in a comfortable posture and be, as far as possible, free from external disturbing influences. Drive off negative thoughts. Become positive always. You can do nice meditation when you are positive.

Do not cause pain or suffering to any living being from greed, selfishness, irritability or annoyance. Give up anger or ill-will. Give up the spirit of fighting and heated debates. Do not argue. If you quarrel with somebody or if you have a heated debate with anybody, you cannot meditate for 3 or 4 days. Your balance of mind will be upset. Much energy will be wasted in useless channels. The blood will become hot. The nerves will be shattered. You must try your level best to keep a serene mind always. Meditation can proceed from a serene mind only. A serene mind is a valuable spiritual asset for you.

The aspirant should possess serenity. The divine light can descend only in a serene mind. Serenity is attained by the eradication of Vasanas or desires and cravings. The aspirant should be fearless also. This is the most important qualification. A timid or cowardly aspirant is very far from Self-realisation.

The arduous practice of Yoga demands an abundance of energy and nerve power on the part of the Yogic student. If one conserves the seminal energy only, he can have an abundance of energy and nerve power. Semen or vital juice tones the nerves and brain and energises the system. He who has preserved his vital force by the vow of celibacy and sublimated it into Ojas Sakti can practise steady meditation for a long period. He only can ascend the ladder of Yoga. Without Brahmacharya no iota of spiritual progress is possible. Brahmacharya is the very foundation on which the superstructure of meditation and Samadhi can be built up. Many people waste this vital energy—a great spiritual treasure indeed—when they become blind and lose their power of reason under excitement. Pitiable indeed is their lot! They cannot make any substantial progress in Yoga.

There must be firm Vairagya, burning Mumukshutva and strong Viveka in you. There must be a good spiritual teacher, an Anubhavi Guru, to guide you.

You must have an intellectual grasp, intellectual conviction and a comprehensive understanding of Brahman first through the purified mind.

Many do not get the above favourable conditions for spiritual Sadhana. That is the reason why they do not make any spiritual progress.

9

STEP BY STEP ON THE YOGA LADDER

Non-injuring, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving of gifts conducive to luxury are Yama. Internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God are Niyama.

Yama and Niyama are the foundation of Yoga. They purify the heart, Chitta and mind. They remove the cruel nature of man. Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are absolutely impossible if you have not practised Yama and Niyama. Do not try to build a superstructure without having a proper foundation.

A Pure Mind Only Can Meditate

You can never, never realise God if you have not got rid of Kamini-Kanchana, lust and desire for gold, if you are not established in mental Satya,. mental Brahmacharya and mental Ahimsa. In mental Satya, the very idea of lie does not enter the mind. In mental Brahmacharya, the very idea of lust does not enter the mind. Even in dreams you must be free from lustful thoughts. It requires long practice and a careful watch over the mind. Foolish people hastily jump up to the practice of meditation in vain, without having these virtuous qualities which are very essential for spiritual Sadhana. Brahman is pure. You can realise It only if you are pure in mind and body. You can know Brahman only by becoming Brahman. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*. He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. Practise Yama-Niyama first. You will get everything.

Mental Brahmacharya is very, very important. The very idea of lust must not enter the mind. No lustful thought must form in the Antahkarana. There must be perfect chastity of thought. That is mental Brahmacharya or Manasika Brahmacharya. Evil thoughts are the beginning of adultery. Lord Jesus says: "If you cast a lustful look, you have already committed adultery in the heart". Mental actions are the real actions. Worldly persons judge a man by physical acts. God and Jnanis judge a man by the motives, by the mental actions. In mental Brahmacharya, you must not get any bad dream. There must not be the least difference in feeling when you touch a stone, a book, a tree and a woman. That is mental continence.

If you want to enter into deep meditation and Samadhi, you must have a pure heart. When the mind becomes pure, it attains the state of steadiness and becomes one-pointed. If the moral qualities are not cultivated, the means cannot lead to steadiness. Therefore, one should be well established in Sadachara if one wants to attain perfection in Yoga.

If you possess a pure heart, meditation and Samadhi will come by themselves. A pure mind that is one-pointed will move naturally towards Atman or God. Many aspirants retire into solitude without purifying their heart and practise meditation. They do not get any success through such attempts. If you want to enthrone God in your heart, you must eradicate all evil Vrittis. What do you do when you expect to receive a very high personage in your bungalow? You keep the compound quite clean and remove all the weeds and rubbish. You clean all the rooms and spread nice carpets. Similarly, you will have to remove all the dross of impurities from the mind if you want to have communion with the Lord, if you desire to call upon God earnestly to take His seat in your heart.

To practise meditation or contemplation in a mind unprepared by non-adherence to the moral precepts is like building a house on a rotten foundation. You may build up the house, but it will surely fall. You may practise meditation for many years, but you will not realise any tangible result or fruit if you have no ethical training as foundation. Mental purity, through ethical training, is of paramount importance if you wish to achieve success in meditation and Samadhi. Before you attempt to practise meditation, you must lead the necessary strict moral life. You must have the necessary right understanding. Then only you will have sanguine success in meditation. Much more time is required in the preparation of the mind for meditation than for the actual practice.

Those people who have not practised any Yogic discipline or curbing of the senses, Vrittis or impurities, will find it difficult to practise concentration and meditation. Their mind will be ever oscillating like the pendulum of a clock. Their mind will be ever roaming about like the wild bull or the monkey.

He who says and imagines, "I practise deep meditation daily", when he has not removed the evil traits or qualities or Vikaras of the mind, deceives himself first and then the others. He is a first-class confirmed hypocrite.

You will be able to enter into deep meditation only if you lead a moral life. When you have led the moral life, you may try further to build up discrimination and the other steps in your mind. You can cultivate the mind in concentration and can finally devote yourself to meditation. The more you lead the moral life, the more you meditate, the greater will be the likelihood of your entering into Nirvikalpa Samadhi which can liberate you from the round of births and deaths and can confer on you eternal bliss and immortality.

All aspirants commit mistakes now, jumping to Samadhi and Dhyana all at once as soon as they leave their houses, without caring a bit for ethical perfection. The mind remains in the same condition although they have practised meditation for fifteen years. They have the same jealousy, hatred, idea of superiority, pride and egoism.

You must have a pure mind if you want to realise the Self. Unless the mind is set free and you cast away all desires, cravings, worries, delusion, pride, lust, attachment and likes and dislikes, it cannot enter the domain of supreme peace and unalloyed felicity or the Immortal Abode.

Mind is compared to a garden. Just as you can cultivate good flowers and fruits in a garden by ploughing and manuring the land, and removing the weeds and thorns, and watering the plants and trees, so also you can cultivate the flower of devotion in the garden of your mind by removing the impurities of the mind such as lust, anger, greed, delusion and pride and watering it with divine thoughts.

When the garden is clean, when there are no weeds and thorns, you can get good fruits. So also, when the mind is pure, when the mind is free from lust, anger, etc., you can have the fruit of good deep meditation. Therefore, cleanse the mind of its impurities first. Then the current of meditation will flow by itself.

Weeds and thorns grow in the rainy season and disappear in summer; but their seeds remain underneath the ground. As soon as there is a shower, the seeds again germinate and sprout out. Even so, the Vrittis or modifications of the mind manifest on the surface of the conscious mind, then disappear and assume a subtle seed-state, the form of Samskaras. These Samskaras again become Vrittis either through internal or external stimulus.

If you want to keep a garden always clean, you will have to remove not only the weeds and thorns and other small plants, but also the seeds that lie underneath the ground which again and again germinate during the rainy season. Even so, you will have to destroy not only the big waves or Vrittis of the mind, but also the Samskaras which are the seeds for births and deaths, from which germinate the Vrittis again and again, if you want to enter into Samadhi and attain liberation or perfect freedom.

If you apply fire to green wood, it will not burn; but if you apply fire to a piece of dry wood, it will at once catch fire and burn. Even so, those who have not purified their mind will not be able to start the fire of meditation. They will start sleeping or dreaming or building castles in the air if they sit for meditation. But those who have removed the impurities of their mind by Japa, service, charity, Praṇayama, etc., will enter into deep meditation as soon as they sit for meditation. The pure ripe mind will at once burn with the fire of meditation.

It takes a long time for charcoal to catch fire, but gunpowder can be ignited within the twinkling of an eye. Even so, it takes a long time for igniting the fire of knowledge for a man whose heart is impure. But an aspirant with great purity of heart gets Knowledge of the Self within the twinkling of an eye, within the time taken to squeeze a flower by the fingers.

The Vital Importance of Pratyahara

If there are mangoes on the top of a big tree, you do not jump all at once to pluck them. It is impossible. You gradually climb up the tree by getting hold of different branches and then reach the top of the tree. Even so, you cannot jump all at once to the summit of the spiritual ladder. You will have to place your foot with caution on each rung of the ladder. You will have to practise Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana. Then only you will reach the highest rung of the ladder of Yoga, viz., Samadhi. If you are a student of Vedanta, you will have to equip yourself with the Four Means. Then you will have to do Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. Then only you will attain Brahma Sakshatkara.

A certain doctor neglected to properly study physiology, which treats of the functions of the various viscera or internal organs of the body. As he neglected physiology, he was not able to understand pathology, which is physiology in disease. He neglected to learn pathology properly. He was not able to understand diagnosis through which he can differentiate various diseases. He neglected to study carefully the differential diagnosis and medicine. He was not able to treat properly.

So, if you want to treat a case properly, you must know diagnosis and medicine well. If you want to diagnose well, you must know pathology properly. If you want to know pathology, you must know physiology well.

Likewise, if you want Samadhi, you must know well the process of Dhyana. If you want Dhyana, you must know accurately the method of Dharana—concentration. If you want Dharana, you must know perfectly the method of Pratyahara or abstraction. If you want Pratyahara, you must know Pranayama. If you want Pranayama, you must know Asana well. Before going into the practice of Asana, you should practise Yama and Niyama. There is no use of jumping into Dhyana without having the various preliminary practices. You will be in the same position as that of the miserable doctor who was not able to diagnose and treat a case properly owing to his neglect of the study of physiology, pathology and medicine.

The Yogic student should practise Pratyahara after getting some success in the practice of Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama. Pratyahara is abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from their objects. The senses are held in check by this practice. That Yogic student who jumps at once to the practice of meditation without practising abstraction is a deluded soul. He will have no success in contemplation. Pratyahara checks the outgoing tendencies of the senses. It puts a break, as it were, on the senses. Pratyahara follows automatically the practice of Pranayama. When the life-force is controlled by regulation or restraint of the breath, the senses become thinned out. They are starved to death. They get emaciated. They cannot hiss now when they come in contact with their objects.

The aspirant can take up the practice of meditation after he is well up in Pratyahara and concentration. If the Indriyas are turbulent, if the mind cannot be fixed on one point, no meditation is possible even within hundreds of years. One should go stage by stage and step by step. The mind should be withdrawn again and again to the point when it runs. One should reduce his wants and renounce all sorts of wild, vain desires of the mind. A desireless man only can sit quiet and practise meditation.

Pratyahara is a trying discipline indeed. It is disgusting in the beginning, but later on it becomes very interesting. You will feel inner strength. It demands considerable patience and perseverance. It will give you tremendous power. You will develop immense will-power. During the course of practice, the senses will run again and again like a wild bull towards objects. You will have to withdraw them again and again and fix them on the Lakshya or the point. That Yogi who is well-established in Pratyahara can meditate quite calmly even in the battle-field where countless machine-guns roar in continuous stream.

You should practise withdrawal of the Indriyas one by one. Deal with the most turbulent sense first. Practise Pratyahara of that particular sense to start with. Then you can take up another Indriya. If you try to manipulate all the Indriyas at a time, you will gain no success. The task will be an uphill work. You will feel quite exhausted.

Partial success in the practice of Pratyahara will not help the Yogic student much. If Vairagya wanes, and if there is slackness in the practice, the senses may again become turbulent.

If you can consciously do Pratyahara at will, consciously attaching and detaching the mind to and from the senses, you have gained really a great control over the mind. You can check at any time the outgoing tendencies or outgoing forces of the mind. Pratyahara is the stepping stone to inner spiritual life. He who has succeeded in Pratyahara can concentrate his mind quite readily for a very long time. Dharana and Dhyana come automatically if Pratyahara is perfect. An aspirant has to struggle hard to have mastery over Pratyahara. Perfect Vairagya is indispensable for success in Pratyahara. You can succeed after strenuous and incessant struggle for some years. *Tatah Parama Vasyatendriyanam*. Thence arises the supreme control of the organs. (Yoga Sutras, II-55).

During the period of Sadhana, do not mix much; do not talk much; do not walk much; do not eat much; do not sleep much. Observe carefully the five 'do-not's. Mixing will cause disturbances in the mind. Talking much will cause distraction of the mind. Walking much causes exhaustion and weakness. Eating much induces Alasya and Tandri, laziness and sleepiness.

Success in Pratyahara depends upon the strength of past Yogic Samskaras which the Yogic student possesses. He who has practised Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara in his previous births to some extent will have success in Pratyahara within a short time in this birth. A beginner who attempts to practise Yoga for the first time in this birth, who has no previous Samskaras of past births to his credit, may take a pretty long time to achieve some definite positive realisation in Pratyahara. One can himself feel whether he is a new practitioner in Yoga or an old Yogic student or Yoga Brashta from his own experiences and the degree of success in his practice in this birth.

10

PLACES FAVOURABLE FOR MEDITATION

"One should perform his Yogic meditation
in a level place, free from pebbles,
fire, wind, dust, dampness and disturbing
noises, where the scenery is charming and
pleasing to the eyes, and where there
are bowers, caves and good water places
which help the practice of concentration."

(Svetasvataropanishad, 11-10)

The world will not suit you for meditation. There are many disturbing causes. The environments are not elevating. Your friends are your worst enemies. They take away all your time through vain talks. It is inevitable. You are puzzled. You are worried. Then you try to get out of the environments. To save time, money and wanderings, I shall mention some good places. You can select one of these places. The place must be of a temperate climate and must suit you during summer, the rainy season and winter. You must stick to one place for three years with firm determination.

You can hardly get a place that can satisfy you from all viewpoints. It is an impossibility. You must not shift when you get some inconvenience. You must put up with it. There is no use in frequent wanderings. It is only those who have preponderating Vishaya Samskaras that flutter about from Brindavan to Benares, from Benares to Jagannath Puri, like the wild butterfly.

Do not compare one place with another. Maya tempts you in various ways. Use your Viveka and reason. Mussorie will appear to you most charming when you are at Shimla. Shimla will appear more delightful when you are at Mussorie. Everything is relative in this world. Do not believe the mind and senses any more. Enough, enough of their tricks. No more. No more. Be on the watch to guard yourself from sense deceptions and temptations.

First I suggest Rishikesh and Swargashram. They are wonderful places for meditation. They are admirably adapted. The charm and spiritual influence are simply marvellous. You can put up your cottage. Brahmapuri, Garuda Chatty and Nilakanth near Rishikesh are other nice places. Uttarkashi has beautiful, spiritual vibratory conditions. You can stay in a solitary place called Lakshesvar.

Solitary places like Swargashram, Rishikesh and Uttarkashi have a beautiful charm of their own. It is indescribable. It is to be felt and understood by the subtle Nididhyasana Buddhi. A gross, worldly practical Buddhi can never discriminate and understand the beauty and peace of such remarkable places, the supreme abodes of sages and Rishis. The spiritual vibratory conditions that are present in these places can, by themselves, take a man to Samadhi without any effort. The Himalayan vibrations, soothing and soul-elevating, and the influence of the holy Ganga can turn an inveterate atheist and materialist into a staunch believer. Live for three months in these places. Realise the charm, grandeur and benign influence of solitude.

An aspirant who meditates in a solitary upstairs room in a town will have as much quiet there as in a forest. But he will not have the congenial spiritual vibrations there as in Rishikesh, Uttarkashi or Gangotri. Vibrations play a vital part in the elevation of mind and in producing Ekagrata of mind. In these holy places, the vibrations of Rishis are lodged in the ethereal space and the aspirants are highly benefited by these vibrations. Vairagya, Sattvic Bhava and the meditative mood come by themselves without effort or struggle in these holy places. Some ladies got down from the train at Rishikesh station. The moment they saw the Himalayas, they uttered: "Who is son? Who is father? Everything is Maya. Everything is false". Such is the powerful influence of vibrations on the mind. It is only sages and Yogins who can know at once the nature of vibrations in a place and their suitability for meditation.

Almora and Nainital are also good. Any village on the banks of the Ganga, the Narmada and the Yamuna is beautiful. Kulu valley and Chamba valley in Kashmir are quite suitable.

Lakshmanjhula is another good place. There is ample space for erection of new cottages. Brahmavarta, near Kanpur, is a suitable place. There are many good places seven miles beyond Mathura on the banks of the Yamuna.

Mount Abu is a beautiful cool place. Cool places are needed for meditation. The brain gets tired very soon in a hot place. In a cool place, you can meditate all the twenty-four hours. You will not feel exhaustion. The Maharajas of Alwar and Limbdi have built nice caves in Mount Abu and arranged food and other conveniences for good, educated Sadhus.

Mussorie, Darjeeling, Shimla, Ooty, Kodaikanal and all hill stations are cool places. They have beautiful scenery also. But they are Rajasic centres. They have no elevating spiritual vibrations. People go there for enjoyment and taint the atmosphere. Hence they are not suitable for meditation.

You must have some conveniences also such as a library, medical aid and a railway station in the beginning. You must be able to get some fruits and milk. Otherwise it will be difficult to continue your Sadhana in one place for a long time. When you are advanced in Sadhana, when you go above body-consciousness, you can remain in any place.

Solitude for Sadhana, a Great Desideratum

Ekanath, Raja Janaka and others realised by doing spiritual Sadhana while remaining in the world. Ekanath lived in the world with wife and children, practised devotional Yoga and attained Sayujya. Raja Janaka ruled over Mithila and attained Jnana amidst royal activities. Swami Vidyaranya, the author of the reputed Panchadasi, was the Dewan of Vijayanagaram. He worked as the Dewan of the State, practised meditation and realised by remaining in the world. The central teaching of the Gita is to realise in and through the world.

Sri Tilak and Sri Aurobindo have strongly preached this doctrine. The obstacles to Yoga are not from outside but from within. If you have succeeded in perfect Pratyahara, you can remain wherever you like. This is all true, doubtless. But just hear the other part of the story. Do not be one-sided. Look to the other side of the shield.

This is plausible, sounds alright, but not feasible in the vast majority. It is easier said than done. How many Janakas and Ekanaths have you had? These people were really Yoga Brashtas. It is absolutely impossible for the vast majority.

Lord Jesus was missing for 18 years. Buddha went into seclusion for 8 years in the Uruvala forest. Swami Rama Tirtha was a recluse in the Brahmapuri forest for 2 years. Sri Aurobindo preached realisation amidst activity, but had shut himself in a closed room for many years. Many had taken up seclusion during Sadhana period. You can make a beginning in the world, but when you have made some progress, you must shift yourself up for advanced practices to a suitable place where you will find spiritual vibrations and solitude. If you have once tasted properly to the very depth the happiness of solitude, you will never leave it at any cost.

As the will-power in many persons has become very weak, as they have had no religious discipline or training in schools and colleges when they were young, as they are under the sway of materialistic influences, it is necessary for them to go in for seclusion for some weeks, months or years to practise rigorous Japa and undisturbed meditation. In the world, the environments are quite unfavourable for Sadhana and meditation. They excite, ignite and kindle the nerves, Samskaras, desires and the senses.

Those who have fixed up their sons in life, who have retired from service, and those who have no ties or attachment in the world, can remain in seclusion for 4 or 5 years and practise intense meditation and Tapas for purification and Self-realisation. This is like entering a university for higher studies or a post-graduate course. When the Tapas is over, when they have attained Self-knowledge, they should come out and share their knowledge and bliss with others. They should disseminate knowledge of the Self through lectures, conversations, discourses or heart-to-heart talks according to their capacity and disposition.

If you want to retire into solitude for the practice of meditation, if you are a householder with spiritual thirsting for intense Sadhana, you cannot all on a sudden sever your connection with your family people. Sudden severance from worldly ties and possessions will give you intense mental agony and induce shock in your family people. You will have to break the ties gradually. Stay in seclusion for a week or a month to begin with. Then gradually prolong the period. Then they will not feel the pangs of separation.

He who has reduced his wants, who has not a bit of attraction for the world, who has discrimination and dispassion, who has burning yearning for liberation, who has observed Mauna for months together, will be able to live in seclusion.

The aspirant should be free from hope, desire and greed. Then only he will have a steady mind. Hope, desire and greed make the mind ever restless and turbulent; they are the enemies of peace and Self-knowledge. The aspirant should not have too many possessions also. He can keep only those articles which are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his body. If there are too many possessions, the mind will be ever thinking of the articles and attempting to protect them. Those who want quick progress in meditation during seclusion should not keep any connection with the world by way of correspondence, reading newspapers, thinking of the family members or thinking of their possessions.

When you go in for seclusion for intense Tapas and meditation or when you practise intense meditation in a quiet room, do not bother much about your shaving. Let the hair grow. These mechanical thoughts such as thoughts of shaving will produce great distraction in your mind and interfere with the continuity of divine thoughts. Do not think much of the body, bread and clothing. Think more of God or Atman.

The aspirant need not bother about his bodily wants. Everything is provided for by God. Everything is prearranged by Mother Prakriti. She looks after the bodily wants of all very carefully in a more efficient manner than they themselves would do. Prakriti knows in a better manner what the requirements are and provides them then and there. Understand the mysterious ways of Mother and become wise. Be grateful to Her for Her unique kindness, grace and mercy.

When young aspirants take to absolute solitude and silence, they will have to face boldly three obstacles, viz., depression, building castles in the air and hatred for householders, men and women. They become misanthropes. They should entertain cheerful thoughts. Watch the mind very often and radiate pure love for all.

The theory of Ajati Vada has made several of our young men retire into forests for contemplative life aimlessly. They have not properly understood the Vedanta philosophy and the rationale of meditation. They have ignored the world totally on the ground that it is absolutely non-existent. They have neglected the proper maintenance of the physical body also. Meditation is a very difficult process. It is only those who are able to meditate for twenty-four hours who can take to absolute seclusion for a long time. A novice can hardly keep the mind fully occupied during seclusion. He does not know how to handle the mind and fix it properly in the Lakshya. All the physical neglect of the body leads to gradual debility. In the long run, owing to debility and mental lethargy consequent on the irrational seclusion, many Sannyasins become Tamasic and this Tamas is mistaken for Sattva. They become absolutely useless both for themselves and for the world. All possible care should be taken to keep the body in a healthy condition. A Sadhaka should take more care of the body than a worldly man, because it is with this instrument that he has to reach the goal. At the same time, he should be quite unattached to the body and be prepared to give it up at any moment. That is the proper ideal. When he finds that after some years of seclusion he has made no improvement and that he is passing into Tamas, he should come up to the world and combine both congenial action and meditation. He can evolve through activity, but Tamas will totally annihilate spiritual growth.

The Suitability of Cave Life

Cave life is extremely good. The ancient Rishis and seers of India lived in the caves of the Himalayas and did rigorous Tapascharya. The temperature is quite even in caves. Caves are very cooling. The heat of scorching summer cannot penetrate inside the cave. It is quite warm in winter. All external sounds are shut out in a cave. You can have very beautiful uninterrupted meditation. There is solitude in caves. The spiritual currents are elevating. There is no mundane atmosphere there, because modern civilisation has not penetrated there. Such are the advantages of cave life.

There is the beautiful Vasishtha Guha in the Himalayas, fourteen miles away from Rishikesh. Maharshi Vasishtha did Tapas here. Hence the name "Vasishtha Guha". 'Guha' means a cave. You can get milk from the neighbouring villages. Bamrughi Guha, near Tehri, Himalayas, is another good cave. There are caves near Nilakanth Hills, six miles from Rishikesh.

Cave life is not suitable for aspirants who have had modern education, who have a delicate constitution and who are timid. It is meant for aspirants who have a strong sturdy frame, who are fearless and who have intense power of endurance. Those who have some Divya Siddhis can live in caves. Those who have a good knowledge of the Butis or Himalayan herbs, who have strengthened the body by means of special Kayakalpa, who have a body which is proof against bites of poisonous insects or creatures by taking a course of Nim Kalpa or purified *nux vomica*, those who have Mantra Siddhi, who have control over wild animals, who can bear heat and cold, hunger and thirst, those who have lost all attraction for the world, the sense objects and work of any kind, who can meditate for a long time, who have internal dispassion—they can remain in a cave.

Some young raw aspirants with weak body and indifferent health, in whom a ray of Viveka and dispassion has recently dawned through the study of some religious books, through some mishap or some difficulties in life, run to the Himalayan caves without any previous preparation or bodily and mental discipline. Just as the mercury in the thermometer runs to 106 degrees in high fever, so also, juvenile bubbling emotion runs to

112 degrees to the crown of the head. It cools down quickly. They find it difficult to pull on there and leave the place in a few days. For some, cave life is not suitable. They develop some sort of skin disease and pale-bloodedness owing to lack of ventilation.

There is another disadvantage in cave life. He who lives in a cave for a long time becomes Tamasic. He is unable to do any kind of work. He cannot mix with people. He is terribly afraid of a multitude of people. His mind gets distracted soon if he is in the company of a few persons, if he hears a little noise. This is not balanced life. This is one-sided development. He who dwells in the cave must be able to keep his balance even when he comes to a busy town. This is the sign of spiritual growth.

If the senses are turbulent, if you have not got the power to withdraw the senses, you will have no peace of mind even in a solitary cave in the Himalayas. A disciplined Yogi who has controlled his senses and the mind can enjoy peace of mind in a solitary cave. A passionate man who has not controlled the senses and the mind will be only building castles in the air if he lives in a solitary cave in the mountains.

You may be living in a solitary cave in the Himalayas. You may be practising meditation. If the memory of your past experiences in the plains comes, if you allow the mind to dwell on it again and again, you are actually living in the plains only, though your abode is in the solitary retreats of the Himalayas. Further you do not lead the perfect divine life in the cave, because you lead the past worldly life again subjectively in the sacred cave. Thought is the real action.

The aspirant or Yogi in the cave in the Himalayas thinks that he is very much advanced in spirituality. He looks with contempt at his brother who is plodding to reach the goal through untiring selfless service and meditation combined. The former may be rich in Vairagya and Titiksha. He may be proficient in the study of scriptures. He may be able to bear cold. He may be able to live on bread and Dhal alone. He may be able to sit on one Asana at a stretch for a longer time. But he may be lacking in mercy, cosmic love, broad tolerance, generosity, courage, etc. He may not be able to bear heat, he may complain of strong Vikshepa, he may not be able to keep up a balanced mind when he comes to the plains. Whereas, the latter may possess his own special virtues and balanced mind and may excel even the Yogi of the Himalayas in many respects. One should have excellence in all virtues. Then only he will become a perfect sage. Equanimity is Yoga.

How can sense control be tested in a lonely forest where there are no temptations? The Yogic student of the cave should test himself after growing sufficiently by entering the plains. But he should not test himself every now and then like the man who removed the young plant daily after watering to see if it had struck deep root or not.

Artificial caves with good ventilation can be built underneath the ground in any solitary place, even in your own compound or village. Two walls with a hollow in the middle, and pipes to bring in cool air and take away hot air, will keep the cave quite cool. All real aspirants who remain in the world should build one for their meditation. They will be immensely benefited.

The real snug, well-furnished, marvellous, awe-inspiring cave is in your heart. It is the Hridaya Guha of the Upanishads wherein Dattatreya, Sankara and Yajnavalkya dwelt in days of yore. Even now, modern Rishis and sages abide there, withdrawing the outgoing senses and mind. They drink the nectar of immortality there and remain ever blissful.

May you all dwell in this mysterious, magnificent cave in the heart alone in communion with your Inner Self, the secondless Brahman or the Absolute, the Goal, the Sole Refuge of all.

man. He used to beat me very severely. I tremble the very moment I think of his form. My legs quiver. This will never suit me. I should say that this method is even more difficult than the previous ones. I pray, Guruji, kindly suggest a very, very simple method this time. I will surely follow".

Ram Acharya said: "Oh Krishna, tell me now, which thing do you like best?". Krishna replied: "Oh Guruji, I have tended a buffalo in my house. I have taken plenty of milk, curd and Ghee from that buffalo. I like it best of all. I constantly remember this". Ram Acharya said: "Krishna, now go to this room, lock the door, sit in a corner on a mat and constantly think and meditate on that buffalo only to the exclusion of all other objects. Don't think of anything else. Do this presently".

Krishna Chaitanya was very much pleased. With a very cheerful mind he went inside the room, followed the instructions of the Guru implicitly and began to meditate on the buffalo with one-pointed mind intensely. He did not get up from the seat for three days continuously.

Krishna Chaitanya forgot all about his food. He was unconscious of his body and surroundings. He was deeply absorbed in the form of the buffalo. Ram Acharya came on the third day to the room of Krishna to see his condition and found Krishna absorbed in meditation. With a loud voice, the Guru called out "Oh Krishna, how do you feel? Come outside to take your food". Krishna replied: "Oh Guru, I am much grateful to you. I am in deep meditation now. I cannot come out now. I am very big. Horns have grown out of my head. I cannot get out of the small door. I like the buffalo very much. Also, I have become a buffalo myself".

Ram Acharya found out that Krishna's mind had attained Ekagrata and was quite fit for attaining Samadhi. Ram Acharya said: "Oh Krishna, you are not a buffalo. Now change your meditation. You are not a buffalo. Forget the Nama-Rupa, the name and form of the buffalo, and meditate on the underlying essence of the buffalo, the Sat-chit-ananda which is your real Svarupa". Krishna Chaitanya changed his method, adhered to the Guru's instructions and attained Kaivalya Mukti, the goal of life.

The above story goes to illustrate that meditation on any object which the mind likes best is very easy. This proposition is corroborated by the aphorism *"Yathabhimatadhyanadva"* in the Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi. (Yoga Sutras, 1-39) The meaning of the Sutra is: "Or (by meditation on) anything that appeals to one as good".

Patanjali Rishi suggests various methods for meditation as "Meditate on the Effulgent One in the lotus of the heart who is beyond sorrow", "Meditate on the heart that has given up all attachment to sense-objects" and "Meditate on the knowledge that comes in sleep". And lastly he has introduced the above Sutra No. 39: "Meditate on anything that appeals to you as good". It will be easy to concentrate on a thing which the mind likes best.

17

MEDITATION EXERCISES

Meditation on a Rose

Sit in Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asana in a room set apart only for meditation and meditate on the colour and form of the rose, the various parts of the rose such as petals, stalk and pollen, on the various kinds of roses as white rose, yellow rose, red rose and cabbage rose, on the various rose preparations as rose water, rose syrup, scents as Otto de Rose, essence of rose, and rose confections as Gulkand, on the diverse uses of the rose as rose water for cleaning the eyes in ophthalmia, Gulkand as a laxative in constipation, and rose flowers and garlands for worship of God and for wearing, on the various virtuous properties of the rose such as its cooling effect on the system and its carminative properties, on the price of roses and rose garlands, on the places where they are found in abundance, and on various other items connected with the rose. You must exclude every other foreign thought associated with other objects. By this concrete method of meditation the mind becomes fit for abstract meditation. Practise for half an hour daily in the morning at 5 a.m. for a month.

Meditation on Mahatma Gandhiji

Retire to your meditation room. Sit in Padmasana. Meditate on the form, stature, height and colour of Gandhiji, his educational career in England, his legal practice in Africa, his political activities to raise the condition of Indians in Africa, his energetic activities in the non-cooperation movement in India, his famous Charkha and Khaddar, his widespread preaching throughout India for popularising Khaddar, his strenuous efforts to unite the Hindus and the Muslims, his exertions to uplift the degraded position of the downtrodden people, his noble ideals and laudable principles, his life of absolute renunciation, Tyaga and Sannyasa, his life of severe Tapascharya, his abstemious nature in diet, his incessant struggle in the achievement of mental Brahmacharya, his ideals of Ahimsa and Satyam in thought, word and deed, his facile pen in journalism, his various useful publications in English, Hindi and Gujarati, his establishment of a useful Ashram which trains good Karma Yogins, his strong will and various other noble qualities. Do not allow any other thought to enter. If the mind runs, draw it and fix it on the above thoughts. Practise this for half an hour daily for two months. You will learn the right technique of meditation.

Meditation on Divine Songs

If you are well-versed in music, go to a lonely place, sing beautifully to your heart's content. Develop the Raga and the Ragini luxuriantly from the bottom of your heart. Forget yourself. Forget the past and the environments. This is an easy method. Select some fine Stotras, prayers or philosophical portions. Tukaram's Abhangas, Akhow's songs in Gujarati, Thayumana Swami's songs and Thevaram in Tamil, and Brahmananda Mala in Hindi are admirably suited for this purpose. Ram Prasad, a reputed saint of Bengal, realised in this way. Ram Prasad's songs are very famous throughout Bengal. Ravana pleased Lord Siva through his Sama Gana played with nerve-strings removed out of his body.

You can quite easily withdraw the mind from the objects through singing. Singing immediately elevates and expands the mind. To fix an expanded mind on the Saguna or the Nirguna Brahman is very easy. What is wanted here is good taste for music and skill in music with purity of heart and steady practice of concentration.

Meditation on 12 Virtues

Meditate on these 12 virtues for ten minutes daily: Humility in January. Frankness (Arjava) in February. Courage in March. Patience in April. Mercy (Karuna) in May. Magnanimity in June. Sincerity in July. Pure love in August. Generosity in September. Forgiveness in October.

Balanced state in November. Contentment in December.

Meditate also on purity, perseverance, diligence, Sahasa and Utsaha. Imagine that you are in actual possession of these virtues.

How to Develop Virtues by Meditation

Examine your character. Pick some distinct defect in it. Find out its opposite. Let us say that you suffer from irritability. The opposite of irritability is patience. Try to develop this virtue by meditation on the abstract virtue of patience. Regularly, every morning, sit down at 4 a.m. in Padma or Siddha Asana in a solitary room for half an hour and begin to think of patience, its value, its practice under provocation, taking one point one day, another on another day, and thinking as steadily as you can, recalling the mind when it wanders. Think of yourself as perfectly patient, think of yourself as a model of patience and end with a vow: "This patience which is my true self, I will feel and show from today".

For a few days, probably, there will be no change perceptible. You will still feel and show irritability. Go on practising steadily every morning. Presently, as you say an irritable thing, the thought will flash into your mind, unbidden: "I should have been patient". Still go on in practice. Soon the thought of patience will arise with the irritable impulse and the outer manifestation will be checked. Still go on practising. The irritable impulse will grow feebler and feebler until you find that irritability has disappeared and patience has become your normal attitude towards annoyances. In this manner you can develop various virtues as sympathy, self-restraint, purity, humility, benevolence, nobility, generosity, etc.

Meditation on Gita Slokas

Learn by heart some important Slokas in the Bhagavad Gita. Repeat them mentally after sitting in the Asana.

1. There are some important Slokas which dwell on the immortality of the Soul in the Second Chapter. You can concentrate and meditate on this series of ideas. You will find this practice very, very useful.

2. Meditate on the series of ideas in the Slokas which describe the Sthita Prajna state in the Second Chapter.

3. Meditate on the series of ideas in the Slokas which describe the effects of Yoga in the Sixth Chapter.

4. Meditate on the series of ideas in the Slokas which deal with the attributes of a Jnani in the Thirteenth Chapter.

5. Meditate on the series of ideas in the Slokas which describe the nature of Daivi Sampat in the Sixteenth Chapter.

6. Meditate on the Visvarupa Darshan idea in the Eleventh Chapter.

7. Meditate on the Slokas starting with "Devotee dear to me" in the Twelfth Chapter.

8. Meditate on the 'Gunatita' ideas in the Fourteenth Chapter.

I have given you eight sets of ideas. Select any set that appeals to you most. You can allow the mind to move from one set to another.

Meditation on the Virat Purusha

Sit in Padma or Siddha Asana in your meditation room and meditate on the following thoughts for half an hour daily. This is a gross form of meditation for six months.

1. Heaven is His head.
2. Earth is His foot.
3. The quarters are His hands.
4. The sun and the moon are His eyes.
5. Fire is His mouth.
6. Dharma is His back.
7. The grass and the herbs are His hair.
8. The mountains are His bones.
9. The sea is His bladder.
10. The rivers are His arteries and veins.

The mind will expand now. Afterwards take to Saguna meditation on a form of God such as Rama, Krishna or Siva. Have this kind of meditation for a year. Then have recourse to Nirguna meditation on Brahman. By the practice of these various methods, the mind becomes a fit instrument to take up abstract meditation on an abstract idea.

First meditate on the Virat Purusha. Then take up Saguna meditation. Lastly have Nirguna meditation.

Meditation on Jesus

Place a picture of Lord Jesus in front of you. Sit in your favourite meditative pose. Concentrate gently with open eyes on the picture till tears trickle down your cheeks. Rotate the mind on the cross on the chest of the Lord, the long hair and the beautiful beard, the round eyes and the various other limbs of his body, the fine spiritual aura emanating from his head and so on. Think of his interesting life and the miracles he performed and the various extraordinary powers he possessed. Then close the eyes and try to visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

Meditation on Lord Vishnu

Place a picture of Lord Vishnu with four hands in front of you. Sit in your meditative posture. Concentrate gently on the picture till you shed tears. Follow this plan. This will help concentration. Move the mind on the various parts of the Murthy. See with the mind His feet first, then legs, then His yellow silk cloth, then His golden Hara set with diamonds and Kaustubha gem on the breast, then the earrings, Makara Kundala, then the face, then the crown on the head, then the disc in the right upper hand, then the conch in the left upper hand, then the mace in the right lower hand, then the lotus flower in the left lower hand. This is the order. Then come down to the feet and start again to the upper parts. By this method, the mind will not run towards objects.

Meditation on Lord Krishna

Keep a picture of Lord Krishna with a flute in His hands. Sit in your meditative pose and gently concentrate on the picture till you shed tears. Think of His feet adorned with anklets, yellow garment, various ornaments round His neck, the necklace set with the Kaustubha gem, the long garland of beautiful flowers of various colours, earrings, crown set with precious jewels of priceless value, dark and long hair, sparkling eyes, the Tilaka on the forehead, the magnetic aura round His head, long hands adorned with bracelets and armlets, and the flute in the hands ready to be played upon. Then close your eyes and visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

Vedantic Meditation

This is only Nirguna meditation. Meditate on the following formulae:

I am the All	Om Om Om
I am All-in-all	Om Om Om

I am the Immortal Self in all Om Om Om
I am the Living Truth Om Om Om
I am the Living Reality Om Om Om
I am the Witness of the three states Om Om Om
(Aham Sakshi, Avasthatraya Sakshi)
I am Light of lights Om Om Om
(Nirakara Jyoti Svarupoham)
I am Sun of suns Om Om Om
I am Existence-Knowledge-Bliss
Absolute (Sat-chit-ananda Svarupoham) Om Om Om

Even in the Nirakara or formless Vedantic meditation of the Advaitins, there will be an abstract mental image in the beginning of Sadhana. The abstract image will vanish eventually. When you meditate or assert, negate the three bodies and identify yourself with the Indwelling Essence. Deny the names and forms. Do not mistake either the physical body or the mind, the Prana, the intellect or the Indriyas for the pure eternal Atman. The highest Self is entirely distinct from these illusory vehicles or Mayaic products. Remember this point well. Meditate on the above ideas and bring the Bhava during work also. You can take up any one of the above formulae according to your taste. Bring the mind back to the point again and again if the mind wanders. You can rotate the mind from one formula to another if the mind wanders, and finally fix it on one formula only when the mind has become steady. The mind will become now like the steady flame of a lamp in a windless place. The one formula also will drop by itself. You will rest in your own Svarupa, the thoughtless state of pure bliss. Samadhi or superconscious state will ensue now. Enjoy the Atmic bliss. Rejoice in the inner Immortal Self.

Nirguna Meditation

This is meditation on Nirguna Brahman. This is Ahamgraha Upasana. This is meditation on Om. This is meditation on an abstract idea. Sit in Padmasana. Repeat Om mentally. Keep the meaning of Om always at heart. Feel Om. Feel that you are the all-pervading infinite Light. Feel that you are the Suddha Sat-chit-ananda Vyapaka Atma—Nitya Suddha Siddha Buddha Mukta Brahman—eternal, pure, perfect, all-knowing, eternally free Brahman. Feel you are Chaitanya, absolute consciousness. Feel that you are the Akhanda Paripurna, Ekarasa, Santa, infinite, eternal, unchanging Existence. Every atom, every molecule, every nerve, vein and artery should powerfully vibrate with these ideas. Lip repetition of OM will not produce much benefit. It should be through heart, head and soul. Your whole soul should feel you are the subtle, all-pervading Intelligence. This feeling should be kept up all the 24 hours.

Negate the body-idea.

When you repeat OM mentally, when you chant OM, feel:

Infinity I am	Om Om Om
All Light I am	Om Om Om
All Joy I am	Om Om Om
All Glory I am	Om Om Om
All Power I am	Om Om Om
All Knowledge I am	Om Om Om
All Ananda I am	Om Om Om

Meditate on the above ideas constantly. Constant effort with zeal and enthusiasm is indispensably requisite. Repeat mentally the above ideas incessantly. You will realise. You will have Atma Darshan within two or three years.

Meditation on the Mahavakyas

The Mahavakyas are the sacred sentences of the Srutis. They are four in number:

1. *Prajnanam Brahma.*
2. *Aham Brahma Asmi.*
3. *Tat Tvam Asi.*
4. *Ayam Atma Brahma.*

The first is in the Aitareya Upanishad of the Rig Veda. The second is in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of the Yajur Veda. The third is in the Chhandogya Upanishad of the Sama Veda. And the fourth is in the Mandukya Upanishad of the Atharvana Veda.

The first is a Lakshana Vakya which gives a definition of Brahman and imparts Tatbodha Jnana. The second is an Anubhava Vakya that gives Sakshi Jnana. The third is a Upadesha Vakya and bestows Siva Jnana. The Guru instructs the disciple. The fourth is the Sakshatkara Vakya which confers Brahma Jnana. You can take any Mahavakya and meditate on it as you do on OM.

Meditate on *"Aham Brahma Asmi"*. Constantly feel that you are the Suddha Sat-chit-ananda Vyapaka Atman when you repeat mentally *"Aham Brahma* Asmi". Lip repetition will not produce much benefit. You must intensively feel from the subjective heart. Gradually you will be taken to the superconscious state through deep feeling.

Sit in your Asana on a fourfold blanket. Face the north or the east and constantly feel: Infinity I am, Eternity I am, Immortality I am.

Meditation on the Mahavakyas is tantamount to meditation on OM. You can take either the *"Aham Brahma Asmi"* or the *"Tat Tvam Asi"* Mahavakya and meditate on its significance. Negate or throw out the Koshas yourself and identify with the one Essence that lies behind them.

Meditation on 'Soham'

'Soham' means "He I am" or "I am He", "I am Brahman". This is the greatest of all Mantras. This is the Mantra of the Paramahamsa Sannyasins. This is an Abheda-bodha-vakya which signifies the identity of Jiva or the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Self. This Mantra comes in the Isavasya Upanishad: 'Sohamasmi'.

Soham is only Om. Delete the consonants S and H. You get Om. Soham is modified Pranava or Om. Some like Soham better than Om, because they find it convenient and easy to associate it or mix it with the breath. Further, there is no effort in doing Japa of this Mantra. If you simply concentrate on the breath, if you simply watch the breath, that is quite sufficient.

Meditation on Soham is the same as meditation on Om. Some repeat a compound Mantra "Hamṣa Soham, Soham Hamsa". Before you practise Soham Dhyana or meditation on Soham, you must practise the Neti, Neti (not this, not this) doctrine. You must negate or deny the body and the other Koshas by repeating *"Naham Idam Sariram, Aham Etat Na". "I* am not this body, mind or Prana. I am He, I am He, Soham, Soham!"

Repeat this 'Soham' Mantra mentally. You should feel with all your heart and soul that you are the all-pervading, omnipotent, all-blissful Soul or Brahman. This is important. Then only the full benefits of meditation or Japa of this Mantra will be realised by you. Mere mechanical repetition will not help you much. It has its own benefits, but maximum benefits can be realised only in feeling. Feeling is Self-realisation.

If the intellect tries to feel, "I am Brahman, I am omnipotent" and the Chitta tries to feel, "I am a clerk in the Chief Court. I am weak. I am helpless. What shall I do for money for my daughter's marriage? I am afraid the judge will fine me," realisation is not possible. You must destroy all wrong Samskaras or impressions, all false imaginations, all weaknesses, all superstitions and all vain fears. Even if you are in the jaws of a tiger, you must powerfully roar: "Soham, Soham, Soham, I am *not* this body!." Then only you are a real Vedantin. Even if you have nothing to eat, even if you are on the roll of unemployment, you must say with great force and power, 'Soham, Soham'. You have been spoiled by the mind and by Avidya. It is Avidya, it is mind that has brought one to this limitation through identification with the body. Pierce the veil of ignorance. Tear the five sheaths. Remove the curtain of Avidya or nescience which is a great nuisance. Rest in your own essential Satchidananda Svarupa through the force of meditation on the 'Soham' Mantra!

The Jiva or the individual soul is repeating this Mantra 21,000 times within 24 hours. Even during sleep, the Soham repetition goes on by itself. Watch the breath very carefully and you will know this. When you inhale the breath, the sound 'So' is produced. When you exhale, 'Ham' is produced. This is termed Ajapa Mantra, because this is done without moving the lips and along with the breath. Repeat 'So' mentally when you inhale, 'Ham' mentally when you exhale. Practise this for two hours in the morning and for two hours in the evening. If you can repeat the Mantra for ten hours, it is all the more good. You must practise meditation for full twenty-four hours when you have advanced on the path. Study Hamsa Upanishad. You will find real rest during meditation. There is no necessity for sleep.

The repetition of the compound Mantra "Hamsa Soham, Soham Hamsa" creates a deeper impression. The late famous Sri Seshadri Swami of Tiruvannamalai used to repeat this compound Mantra. We say "God is Love, Love is God". Similarly, repetition of "Hamsa Soham, Soham Hamsa" gives more force.

This intensifies the force of the Mantra. The aspirant gets more internal strength from the Atman or the Soul-force. His conviction grows stronger. This sort of repetition corresponds to the repetition of the Mahavakya, "Aham Brahma Asmi, Brahmaivahamasmi. I am Brahman, Brahman am I".

"Anal Haq" of the Sufi Fakirs corresponds to 'Soham' of the Paramahamsa Sannyasins. Guru Nanak highly extols this Mantra.

Your duration of life is counted really by so many Soham breaths in the light of Yoga. It is not really made up of so many years. By the practice of Pranayama, you can save the Soham breaths and thus prolong your life.

In the beginning of your practice, simply watch the breath every now and then. Meditate for one hour in a closed room on Soham with Bhava and meaning. You can watch the breath with silent Soham repetition while sitting, standing, eating, talking, bathing, etc. This is an easy method of concentration.

If you concentrate on the breath, you will notice that the breath gradually becomes very, very slow when concentration becomes deep. Gradually the repetition of 'Soham' will drop when there is deep concentration. The mind will become very calm. You will enjoy. Ultimately you will become one with the Supreme Self.

18

SAGUNA MEDITATION AND NIRGUNA MEDITATION COMPARED

Prasnopanishad, Tapaniya, Kathavalli, etc., elaborately treat of the method of contemplation on Brahman as devoid of qualities. Badarayana, in a chapter of the "Brahma Sutras" which deals with the nature of the qualities of Brahman, mentions positive attributes like joyful, intelligent, etc., as well as negative attributes like measureless, colourless, etc. Both kinds of attributes are referred to the Absolute; and yet, the contemplation on such a Brahman can be called Nirguna Upasana or meditation on the conditionless Brahman. The chief distinction between the contemplations on conditioned or Saguna Brahman and unconditioned or Nirguna Brahman is that, in the former, the devotee looks upon Brahman as really connected with those attributes, while in the latter, positive and negative qualities are not viewed as essentially connected with Brahman, but only as suggesting Its absolute nature. Hence, joyful, etc., do not enter into the essence of the contemplated Brahman, but act as a gateway for grasping Its true nature. In the contemplation on the conditioned Brahman, these and similar other properties form a part of the contemplation itself.

By Nirguna it does not mean that Brahman is a negative concept, that Brahman is a non-entity or a zero. It means that the qualities found here in limitation are found illimitable in Brahman. It means that the attributes are Brahman's essential nature or Brahman's Svarupa. It means that Brahman does not possess perishable qualities of matter, like the blue colour of a cloth, but possesses all auspicious qualities, Sarva Kalyana Gunas. Brahman is Nirguno Gunee. So also, by Nirakara, it does not mean that Brahman is formless. It means only that He has not got a limited form as that of the objects, but has a form unimaginable. What form can you attribute to Infinity?

Many have a crude idea of Brahman. They say that Brahman is a block of stone, because He has no form, no qualities. He is a regular void, a zero. No. No. They are entirely mistaken. They have not studied the infallible Upanishads, the right means of knowledge, the right source of wisdom, the Upanishads which give an accurate knowledge of Brahman. The Upanishads are infallible, because they appeal to the reason of every thinker, every philosopher. They tally with the experiences of realisation. Hence they are infallible. Their authority is more valid than that of perception or inference. The people who have a wrong notion of Brahman have not made Satsanga, constant association with the wise. They have various doubts. They have a gross intellect which is unfit for philosophical investigation, discrimination, reflection and ratiocination. Brahman is extremely subtle. He is finer than a thousandth part of a point of a hair divided into a thousand parts. A subtle, calm, pure, sharp-pointed, clear and one-pointed Suddha Buddhi is needed for understanding Brahman and meditation on Brahman. The doubters suffer from Samsaya Bhavana, doubts regarding the validity of the Upanishads and regarding the true nature of Brahman. They should purify the mind by selfless service, should study the Upanishads, should develop the Four Means of Salvation, should have constant Satsanga with educated, practical Sannyasins. Then they will have intellectual convictions and an intellectual grasp of Brahman. By Sravana, by Manana, and by Nididhyasana they can reach Brahman. This is the royal road.

So, Brahman is full of auspicious Gunas. He is a lump of luminosity. He is Prajnana Ghana. He is a solid mass of knowledge. He is really more solid than the Himalayas. Knowledge is heavier and more concrete than a huge block of stone.

In Saguna meditation, the devotee considers himself as entirely different from the object of worship. The worshipper makes a total, unreserved, ungrudging, self-surrender to the Lord. He respects, honours and adores the Lord and depends on Him for everything—for food, protection and his very existence. He looks always to the Ishta Devata for help of any sort. There is nothing independent for him. He is an instrument in the hands of the Lord. His hands, legs, senses, mind, Buddhi and physical body belong to the Lord. A devotee does not at all like the idea of Jnana or merging. He likes to have his separate entity as a servant and likes to serve, worship and love the Lord always. He does not like to become sugar as an Advaitin, but likes to taste sugar and eat sugar. This method of worship is one of contraction. Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You so contract yourself to a point and merge in the circumference. This is the path of devotion or Saguna meditation. This is suitable for people of emotional temperament. The vast majority are fit for this line of worship only.

In Nirguna meditation, the aspirant takes himself as Brahman. He denies and sublates the false adjuncts or fictitious environments as egoism, mind and body. He depends upon himself alone. He has absolute self-reliance. The aspirant asserts boldly. He reflects, reasons out, investigates, discriminates and meditates on the Self. He does not want to taste sugar, but wants to become a solid mass of sugar itself. He wants merging. He likes to be identical with Brahman. This method is one of expansion of the lower self. Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You so expand by Sadhana to a very great extent that you occupy the whole circle and envelop the circumference. This method of meditation is suitable for persons of fine intellect, bold understanding, strong and accurate reasoning and powerful will. Only a microscopic minority are fit for this line of meditation.

19

ONE GURU, ONE PLACE, ONE YOGA

Mind is ever changing and wandering. This wandering habit of the mind manifests itself in various ways. You will have to be on the alert always to check this wandering habit of the mind. A householder's mind wanders to cinema, theatre, circus, etc. A Sadhu's mind wanders to Benares, Brindavan and Nasik. Many Sadhus never stick to one place during Sadhana.

The Rajasic mind always wants new things. It wants variety. It gets disgusted with monotony. It wants change of place, change of food, change, in short, of everything. But you should train the mind to stick to one thing. You should not complain of monotony. You should have patience, adamantine will and untiring persistence. Then only you can succeed in Yoga. He who wants something new always is quite unfit for Yoga.

Some aspirants cannot stick to one place even for a week. They want to see new places, new faces and want to talk to new people. A rolling stone gathers no moss. The wandering habit must be checked. A Sadhaka should stick to one place at least for a period of twelve years, one Tapas period. If his health is delicate, he can stay for six months in one place during summer and the rainy season, and for six months in another place during winter. During winter he can stay either at Rajpur near Dehra Dun or at Rishikesh. During summer he can go to Badrinath or Uttarkashi. Sadhana suffers if one wanders constantly. Those who want to do rigorous Tapas must stay in one place.

Too much walking produces weakness and fatigue. It causes Vikshepa. Sadhus with the wandering habit cannot practise any meditation. As soon as they reach a village, they will feel quite tired and will begin to sleep. No Sadhana is possible. An aspirant in the pure Nivritti Marga should stick to one place and practise concentration and meditation. Too much walking must be avoided. It exhausts any man and renders him unfit for active work.

Don't have a goat's mind or a prostitute's heart. A goat grazes for a few seconds in one patch of green grass and then immediately jumps to a far distant patch, even though there is plenty of grass to eat in the first patch. Even so, a wavering mind jumps from one Sadhana to another Sadhana, from one Guru to another Guru, from Bhakti Yoga to Vedanta, from Rishikesh to Brindavan. This is extremely deleterious for the Sadhana. Stick to one Guru, one place, one form of Yoga, one kind of Sadhana. Be steady and firm. Then only you will succeed. Have a steady resolute mind.

No Yoga without a Guru

Some do meditation for some years independently. Later on they actually feel the necessity of a Guru. They come across some obstacles on the way. They do not know how to proceed further and how to obviate these impediments or stumbling blocks. Then they begin to search for a master. A stranger in a big city finds it difficult to go back to his residence in a small avenue even in broad daylight, though he has walked by the route half a dozen times. When difficulty arises even in the case of finding out the way in streets and roads, what to speak of the difficulties in the razor path of spirituality when one walks alone with closed eyes!

The spiritual path is thorny, rugged and precipitous. It is enveloped in darkness. The guidance of a Guru who has already trodden the path is imperative. He will be able to throw light and remove the obstacles in the path.

The spiritual path is quite a different line altogether. It is not like writing a thesis for the M.A. examination. The help of a teacher is necessary at every moment. Young aspirants become self-sufficient, arrogant and self-assertive in these days. They do not care to carry out the orders of the Guru. They do not wish to have a Guru. They want independence from the very beginning. They apply in an absurd manner, with a perverted intellect, the 'Neti, Neti' doctrine and Bhaga-tyaga-lakshana in the case of a Guru also and say: *"Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma. Na Gurur Na Sishyah, Chidananda Rupah Sivoham Sivoham"*. They think they are in the Turiya Avastha when they do not know even the A B C of spirituality or truth. This is the philosophy of Asuras or devils or Satans. They mistake licentiousness or "having their own ways and sweet will" as freedom. This is a serious, lamentable mistake. This is the reason why they do not progress. They lose faith in the efficacy of Sadhana and in the existence of God. They wander about in a happy-go-lucky manner without any aim from Kashmir to Gangotri and from Gangotri to Rameswaram, talking some nonsense on the way, something from Vichara Sagara, something from Panchadasi, and posing as Jivanmuktas.

It is only he who lives under the guidance of a Guru for twelve years, who carries out implicitly the orders of the Guru, who serves the Guru sincerely taking him for Para Brahman, who can really improve in the spiritual path. There is no other way for spiritual progress.

As long as there is the world, there are spiritual teachers and spiritual books. The number of Jivanmuktas may be less in Kali Yuga than in the Satya Yuga. If you cannot get an ideal Guru, you can take even a senior aspirant who has been treading the path of realisation for some years, who is straightforward and honest, who is selfless, who is free from pride and egoism, who has good character, who has knowledge of the Sastras, as your Guru. Live with him for sometime. Study him carefully. If you are satisfied, take him as your preceptor and follow his instructions strictly. After you have accepted him once as your Guru, never suspect him and never find fault with him. Do not change the Guru very often. You will be bewildered. You will get different conflicting ideas. Everybody has got his own Sadhana. You will find no improvement if you change frequently your method of Sadhana. Stick to one Guru and stick to his instructions. Stick to one method. You will evolve quickly. Single-minded devotion to the Guru and the ideal, one kind of Sadhana, and whole-hearted application are indispensable requisites for God-realisation.

Beware of pseudo-gurus. They are knocking about in abundance in these days. They will exhibit some tricks or feats to attract people. Think that those who are proud, who are roaming about to make disciples and to amass money, who talk of worldly matters, who speak untruth, who boast of themselves, who are talkative, who keep company with worldly people and women, and who are luxurious, are impostors. Do not be deceived by their sweet talks and lectures.

Obstacles in the Yoga Path

The aspirant comes across various kinds of obstacles when he practises meditation. Just as volunteers come in front and obstruct the path of those who want to enter a Conference Pandal without tickets, so also, the old Samskaras of enmity, hatred, lust, jealousy, fear, honour, respect, etc., assume definite forms and obstruct the path of aspirants.

Every aspirant will have to face various sorts of difficulties in the spiritual path. Buddha, Uddalaka and Sikhidvaja experienced great difficulties. You need not be discouraged on this score. *Nil desperandum.* Never despair. Failures are stepping stones to success. Muster all your strength and courage and march afresh in the path with redoubled vigour and energy. Take some rest now.

Perfection cannot be attained in a single birth alone. The perfected sages are the products of the sum-total of virtuous actions done in several births. Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "The Yogi, labouring with assiduity, purified from sin and perfected through manifold births, reacheth the Supreme Goal". (Ch. VI-45)

The real and serious obstacles to meditation are from within only. They do not come from outside. Environments are not bad, but your mind is bad. Your mind is not disciplined properly. Wage a war with this horrible and terrible mind. Do not complain against bad environments, but complain first against your own mind. Train your mind first. Uncongenial atmosphere and unfavourable environments and obstacles will help you only in carrying on the struggle more vigorously and diligently. You will evolve quickly and develop strong will-power and great power of endurance. You will become a dynamic personality.

An intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the various obstacles that act as stumbling blocks in the path of God-realisation is indispensable. Then alone the aspirant will find it easy to conquer them one by one. Just as the sailor sails in and out of a harbour along a dangerous coast with the help of a pilot, so also, the aspirant, with the help of a detailed knowledge of these obstacles and the methods to conquer them, will be able to steer clear of them in the ocean of spirituality. Hence, I am giving a very lucid exposition of the various obstacles and effective methods to conquer them.

Aspirants are requested to go through these very carefully often and often when they encounter difficulties in the path. No impediment can stand before a man of fiery determination and iron will.

When slight difficulties appear, do not stop the practice. Find out suitable means to eradicate the obstacles. Plod on till you get the highest Asamprajnata Samadhi. Success is bound to come if you are sincere and steady in Sadhana.

You should have real and intense thirst for God-realisation. Then all obstacles will be obviated. Concentration will be quite easy for you then. Mere emotional bubbling for the time being out of sheer curiosity or for attaining psychic powers cannot bring any tangible result.

20

THE MOST COMMON OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

God-realisation is not possible without Sadhana. Sadhana is not possible without good health. A sickly, dilapidated body stands in the way of Yoga-abhyasa. The aspirant should try his level best to keep good health always by regular exercise, Asana, Pranayama, moderation in diet, walking, running in the open air, and regularity in his work, meals and sleep. He should avoid drugging as much as possible. He must take recourse to nature cure such as fresh air, wholesome food, cold bath and dietetic adjustment. He should always keep up a cheerful attitude of mind under all conditions of life. Cheerfulness is a powerful mental tonic. There is an intimate connection between body and mind. If the mind is cheerful, the body also is healthy. That is the reason why doctors now prescribe laughing three times daily in the treatment of diseases.

Diseases, Poor Health

Diseases arise through a disturbance in the equilibrium between the three humours—wind, bile and phlegm. If there is more phlegm, the body becomes heavy. You cannot sit for a long time in the Asana. If there is more Tamas in the mind, you become lazy.

Diseases may be due to irregularity in taking food, unwholesome food that does not agree with the system, late vigil overnight, loss of seminal energy, checking the urine and faeces. Diseases may also be generated in the body through sleeping in daytime, excess of sexual intercourse, moving in crowds, laborious mental work and lack of regular exercise.

Diseases can be removed by the practice of Asana, Pranayama and physical exercises, meditation, dietetic adjustment, fasting, purgatives, enema, bath, sun-treatment and sufficient rest. First diagnose the case and find out the cause of the disease and then try for a remedy or consult some doctors.

If the Yogic student develops some diseases on account of his indiscretion and failure in observing the laws of health, he says, “My diseases have arisen from the practice of Yoga”. Then he discontinues his practice. This is the first obstacle to Yoga.

Just as clouds screen and obstruct the sun, the cloud of sickness stands in your way. Even then you must not leave the practice of Japa, concentration and meditation. These small clouds of sickness will pass off soon. Give the suggestion to the mind: “Even this will pass away”. The mind is ever ready to deceive you and stop you from the practice of meditation. Do not hear the voice of the mind. Hear the sweet voice of the Soul.

Meditation itself is a tonic and a panacea for all diseases. If you are seriously ailing, you can do Japa and light meditation while lying on the bed.

Some foolish aspirants refuse to take medicine when they are ailing seriously. They say: “It is Prarabdha. We should not go against Prarabdha. Taking medicine is against the will of God. The body is Mithya. If I take medicine, it will increase Deha-adhyasa and body-idea”. This is a foolish philosophy. Take medicine. Do Purushartha. Leave the results to Prarabdha. This is wisdom. These foolish people unnecessarily torture the body, allow the disease to take deep root and spoil their health. They cannot do any Sadhana. They ruin this body instrument by a wrong conception of Vedanta. Vedanta says: “Have no attachment for this body. But keep it clean, strong and healthy for constant, rigid Sadhana". This body is a boat to cross over to the other shore of Immortality. It is the horse to take you to the destination. Feed the horse well, but give up mine-ness. When you are ill, take some medicine for a couple of days, tide over the difficulties in a few days and start the Sadhana again quickly. Do not allow the disease to assume a grave form and become chronic and incurable.

This physical body is the holy shrine of God. It is the temple of the Lord. It is the fort of Isvara. Keep it strong and healthy. Then only you will meet Him. Do not be carried away by a false understanding of Maya Vada. Take care of the body, but have no attachment for it. Be prepared to give it up in a noble cause. This body is an instrument for attaining Self-realisation. You cannot meditate if you have a weak sickly body.

There is a class of people in India called the Rasayanas. They try to make the body strong and healthy by taking Siddha Kalpas. They claim that this body can be made immortal. They say, "This body is an instrument for God-realisation. No realisation of God is possible without a healthy and strong body. Man makes some progress in Yoga and dies before he attains perfection; he takes another birth and then practises Yoga for some years and then dies again. In this way, much time is lost in recurring births and deaths. If the body is kept strong and healthy for a long time, a man can have God-realisation in one birth alone". Therefore they prescribe Kalpas made up of neem essence, *nux vomica,* gold, arsenic, sulphur, mercury, etc. No disease can enter a body which is rendered adamantine by a course of these tonics. They begin spiritual Sadhana after making the body quite strong and healthy. right in the beginning.

Drowsiness and Sleep

Alasya, Tandri and Nidra are the products of Tamas. Alasya is laziness. Tandri is half-sleepy state. Nidra is sleep. Laya also means sleep. Alasya and Tandri are the precursors of sleep. These three are great obstacles in the path of realisation. Sleep is a powerful force of Maya. It is Nidra-sakti.

Laya or mental inactivity is a state which is equivalent to deep sleep. This is as much a source of evil as passion. Wake up the mind in Laya.

You will be imagining that you are meditating. The mind will immediately run through the old grooves into the Mula Ajnana for resting in the twinkling of an eye. You will be doubting if it is sleep or meditation. Sleep is the greatest obstacle as it is very powerful. Even though a Sadhaka is very careful and vigilant, sleep overpowers him somehow or the other. This is a very strong habit. It takes time and demands great strength of will to tear this old habit.

Do not mistake Tandri for Savikalpa Samadhi and deep sleep for Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The glory of the state of Turiya or Bhuma is ineffable. Its splendour is indescribable. If the body is light, if the mind is clear, if there is cheerfulness, know that you are meditating. If the body is heavy, if the mind is dull, know that you were sleeping while meditating.

When sleep tries to overpower you, repeat the Mantra loudly for sometime. Sit in Vajrasana. Dash cold water on your face and head. Stand up for 15 minutes and do the Japa. Do Kirtan. Do Pranayama. All these will help you to control sleep.

Tie the tuft of hair on the head with a piece of string to a nail above. As soon as you begin to doze, the string will pull you up, will wake you up. It serves the part of your mother. Or lean upon an improvised swing for 10 minutes and move yourself to and fro. Do 10 or 20 mild Kumbhakas. Do Sirshasana, the topsy-turvy pose, or Mayurasana, the peacock pose. Take only milk and fruits at night. By these methods you can combat sleep. Stroll for about ten minutes. Keep the light burning if sleep comes.

Take milk and fruits only at night. Avoid overloading the stomach at night. Take the night meals before sunset.

Do 10 to 20 Pranayamas just before starting meditation. Do Sirshasana and Sarvangasana. Run for five minutes in your compound. Drowsiness and sleep will vanish.

Generally, in the second hour of meditation, Tamas enters and sleep supervenes. Aspirants do meditation in the morning for one hour from 4.00 to 5.00 a.m. Then they are overpowered by sleep. They begin to sleep again after 5.00 a.m. This is a general complaint. Do 10 to 20 Pranayamas. Do some Asanas for a few minutes. Again you will be fresh for meditation. Use your common sense always. The old habit may recur again and again. Tear it also again and again by suitable practices and strength of will. Asana, Pranayama, brisk walk, Mitahara, Satsanga, Japa, Dhyana and prayer are the active means for removing Alasya, Tandri and Nidra.

Building Castles in the Air

When the mind has been withdrawn from objects through Vairagya and Uparati, do not allow it to go into sleep or Manorajya. When you constantly contemplate on the meaning of the Mahavakya *"Aham Brahmasmi"* or *"Tat Tvam Asi"* through the process of Mahavakyanusandhana, all the Vishayas—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling—will stop. But, owing to the force of Samskaras, Manorajya—fancies and wild imagination or reverie—will continue. Mind builds castles in the air. This is termed Manoratha in Sanskrit. This is a serious obstacle to meditation. It should be stopped by Vichara. Sometimes, during the course of meditation, the mind suddenly slips into its old grooves for sleeping. People think that they are meditating while they are actually sleeping. A mixture of drowsiness and Manorajya is mistaken by aspirants for deep meditation and Samadhi. The mind appears to be established in concentration and free from distraction. This is a mistake.

Manorajya is a trick of the mind. Look at this wonder. The aspirant is meditating in an isolated cave in the Himalayas. He plans in the cave: "After finishing my meditation, I must move about in San Francisco and New York and deliver lectures there. I must start a centre of spiritual activity in Columbia. I must do something new to the world. I must do something which no one has done up to this time". This is ambition. This is egoistic imagination. This is a great obstacle. This is a powerful Vighna. This will not allow the mind to rest even for a second. Again and again there will be a resurrection of some scheme, speculation or plan. The aspirant will be thinking that he is having deep meditation, but if he closely watches his mind through introspection and self-analysis, it will be a pure case of building castles in the air. One Manorajya will subside and another will crop up in the twinkling of an eye. It will be a small Sankalpa or ripple in the mind-lake. But it will gain tremendous force within a few minutes by repeated thinking. The power of imagination is tremendous. Maya havocs through the power of imagination. Imagination fattens the mind. Imagination is like musk or Siddha-Makaradhvaja. It renovates and vivifies a dying mind. The power of imagination will not allow the mind to keep quiet even for a second. Just as swarms of locusts or flies come forth in a continuous stream, so also, currents of Manorajya will stream forth incessantly.

Closely watch the mind. Make it Ekagra and allow it to rest on the Svarupa. Be thoughtful, careful and vigilant. Stand up for ten minutes and dash cold water on the face and head if drowsiness comes in. Remove the two serious obstacles of Tandri and Manorajya by Vichara, discrimination, prayer, Japa, Pranayama, Dhyana, Satsanga and light, Sattvic diet.

Pranayama checks the velocity of the mind. It calms the bubbling mind.

A young ambitious man is unfit to remain in a solitary cave. He who has done some kind of Sadhana in controlling the mind can remain in a cave. Such a man only can really enjoy the solitude of Himalayan retreats.

If you are alert, and if by protracted efforts and incessant, vigilant Svarupa-chintana or meditation on Brahman you get over the obstacles of sleep, Manorajya, etc., the steady Brahmakara Vritti and Brahma-Jnana will dawn in no time. Ajnana will vanish. You will be established in the Sahaja Paramananda state. All Sanchita Karmas or accumulated Karmas will be burnt up in the fire of wisdom.

Mental Talking

During meditation you will be frequently talking to somebody mentally. Stop this evil habit. Have a careful watch over the mind.

Dreams in Meditation

Various sorts of fantastic dreams trouble some aspirants very much. Sometimes there is a mixture of meditation and dreams. The presence of dreams denotes that you are not yet well-established in deep meditation, that you have not removed Vikshepa and that you have not done constant, intense Sadhana. As the phenomenon of dreams is very peculiar and inexplicable, it is very difficult to control dreams unless you wipe out all the Samskaras in the Karana Sarira or causal body and control all thoughts. As you grow in purity, Viveka and concentration, dreams will decrease.

Doubt

The aspirant begins to doubt whether God exists or not, whether he will succeed in his God-realisation or not, whether he is doing his practices rightly or not. This is a dangerous obstacle in the spiritual path. The student slackens his efforts when these doubts crop up. Maya is very powerful. It misleads people through doubting and forgetfulness. Mind deludes people through doubting. Sometimes the aspirant gives up his Sadhana altogether. This is a serious mistake. Whenever doubt tries to overpower the Sadhaka, he should at once take recourse to the company of Mahatmas and remain with them for sometime under the influence of their currents. He should clear his doubts by conversing with them.

Doubt or uncertainty is a great obstacle in the path of Self-realisation. It bars the spiritual progress. This must be removed by Satsanga, study of religious books, Vichara and reasoning. It will again and again raise its head to mislead the aspirant. It should be killed beyond resurrection by certainty of conviction and firm, unshakable faith based on reasoning.

A doubt arises in the mind whether there is a God or not. This is termed Samsaya-bhavana. Another doubt crops up whether I can realise Brahman or not. Then another voice yells: "God or Brahman is real. He is a solid, concrete Reality as an Amalaka fruit in my hand. He is a mass of Knowledge and Ananda. I *can* realise!". We have clearly understood something and these ideas are well-grounded and ingrained. Some ideas are hazy and not firm. They come and go. We will have to cultivate ideas and ground them till they are firmly fixed and implanted. Clarification of ideas will remove perplexity and confusion in the mind.

When a doubt arises whether there is God or not, whether I will succeed in Self-realisation or not, it must be dispelled by well-directed suggestions and affirmations such as: "It is true. I will succeed. There is no doubt of this. In my dictionary, in my vocabulary, there are no such words as 'can't', 'impossible', 'difficult', etc.". Everything is possible under the sun. Nothing is difficult when you strongly make up your mind. Strong determination and firm resolution will bring sanguine success in every affair or undertaking.

Doubt is your great enemy. Doubt causes restlessness of mind. Destroy all doubts through Vichara and Jnana.

Do not bother about the doubts. There is no end to doubts. Purify your heart. Go on vigorously with the purificatory processes such as Japa and meditation. Meditate regularly. The doubts will be cleared by themselves in a mysterious manner. The great teacher or Inner Ruler is with you. He will illumine you and remove your doubts.

Depression

Very often depression comes in meditation in neophytes owing to previous Samskaras, influence of astral entities, evil spirits, bad company, cloudy days, bad stomach owing to indigestion and loaded bowels in constipation. It must be removed quickly by cheerful thoughts, a brisk walk, singing, laughing, prayer, Pranayama, a purgative and a dose of carminative mixture.

When depression comes and troubles you, the mind will revolt. The Indriyas will pull your legs. The undercurrent of Vasanas will gush to the surface of the mind and torment you. Sensuous thoughts will agitate the mind and try to overwhelm you. Be bold. Stand adamant. Face these passing shocks. Keep your mind cool. Do not identify yourself with these obstacles. Increase your period of Japa and meditation. Strengthen Vairagya and discrimination too. Pray fervently. Live on milk and fruits. All these obstacles will pass away like a rent cloud. With the removal of all troubles, you will shine gloriously. The improvement will be known to you. There will be a change in the mind, in speech and in all actions.

Sometimes you may become despondent and feel, “I have many weaknesses and defects. How can I eradicate them? How can I control this strong and impetuous mind? Will I get liberation or Nirvikalpa Samadhi in this very birth? I have not gained much even though I have practised meditation for the last eight years”. Do not be disheartened. Even if you have controlled one or two Indriyas, even if you have controlled some thoughts, half the battle is won. Control of even one thought or destruction of even one Vasana will give you mental strength. Every thought that is controlled, every desire that is destroyed, every Indriya that is subdued, every defect or weakness that is eradicated will add strength to the mind, will develop your will and take you one step nearer to the goal. Friends! Why this lamentation and despair? Fight bravely in the Adhyatmic battle-field. Become a spiritual soldier. Come out victorious and wear the spiritual laurels of divine wisdom, eternal peace and supreme bliss.

Sometimes the mind will revolt seriously. You will feel: “I have not gained much through Tapas, discipline and meditation. Let me break the vow of Brahmacharya. Let me give up entirely all dietetic discipline. Let me revel in sensual objects. Let me eat sumptuously”. Do not yield. Coax or cajole the mind. Do vigorous Japa and Kirtan. Study my book “How to Get Vairagya” or Bhartrihari’s “Vairagya Sataka” again and again. Remember the pains of Samsara and the defects of a sensual life. Remember the saints and their teachings again and again. Stand adamant. Be cautious. Be vigilant. Watch and pray. The rebellious mind will cool down gradually.

Cessation of Sadhana

Generally, the Sadhaka is very enthusiastic in his Sadhana in the beginning. He is full of zeal. He takes a great deal of interest. He expects to get some results. He expects so many Siddhis within a short time. He thinks that Kundalini will be awakened within six months and he will experience clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought reading, flying in the air, etc. He entertains so many fantastic and queer ideas.

When the aspirant does not get any result, he gets discouraged. He gets dejected. He loses his interest in his Abhyasa and slackens his efforts. He gives up his Sadhana completely. He loses his faith in the efficacy of the Sadhana. This is the trouble in almost all cases.

There are various kinds of impurities in the mind. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and getting an one-pointed mind. Concentration is a question of practice over several lives. Concentration is the most difficult thing in the world. One should not get dejected after some practice for some months or for one or two years. Even if you do a little practice, the effect is there. Nothing is lost. That is the immutable law of nature. You will not be able to detect the little improvement that has come out of a little practice as you have no subtle and pure intellect. You must develop the virtues Vairagya, patience and perseverance to a maximum degree; you must have an unshakable conviction in the existence of God and in the efficacy of spiritual practices. You must have a strong determination: "I will realise God right now in this very birth, nay, in this very second. I will realise or die".

Sometimes the mind gets disgusted with one particular kind of Sadhana. Just as the mind wants some variety in food and other things, so also, it wants variety in the mode of Sadhana also. It rebels against monotonous practice. The aspirant should know how to coax the mind on such occasions and to extract work from it by a little relaxation of mind. The cessation of Sadhana is a grave mistake. Evil thoughts will be ever waiting to re-enter the gates of the mental factory. If the aspirant stops his Sadhana, his mind will become a Satan's workshop. Do not expect anything. Be sincere and regular in your daily routine, meditation and Tapas. Spiritual practices should never be given up under any circumstance. Stop not the Sadhana till the goal is reached.

Sometimes the Sadhaka gets some experience during the course of his Sadhana. He sees wonderful visions of Rishis, Mahatmas and astral entities of various descriptions. He hears various melodious Anahata sounds. He smells Divya Gandha, divine odour. He gets the powers of thought-reading and foretelling. He foolishly imagines now that he has reached the highest goal and stops his further Sadhana. This also is a serious mistake. The aspirant gets false Tushti or satisfaction. Visions and Anahata sounds are all auspicious signs that manifest on account of a little purity and concentration. These are all encouragements which God gives as a sort of incentive for further progress and intense Sadhana. The aspirant gets more strength of conviction by having these experiences. This is not the goal. Sadhana must be continued.

Irregularity in Meditation

If you are careless, if you are irregular in concentration, if your dispassion wanes, if you give up practice for some days on account of laziness, the adverse forces will take you away from the true path of Yoga. You will be stranded. It will be difficult for you to rise up again to the original height. Therefore, be regular in concentration.

When you practise meditation, Japa, Kirtan, Pranayama or enquiry, worldly thoughts, cravings and Vasanas are suppressed. If you are irregular in meditation and if your dispassion wanes, they try to manifest again. They persist and resist. Therefore, be regular in your meditation and do more vigorous Sadhana. Cultivate more dispassion. The Vasanas will be gradually thinned out and eventually destroyed.

If you do not clean a plate daily, it will lose its lustre. It is the same with the mind too. The mind becomes impure if it is not kept clean by the regular practice of meditation. Meditation removes the dross of the mind in an effective manner. Therefore, practise meditation regularly in the early morning.

When you meditate, when you develop divine or Sattvic virtues, a spiritual road is constructed in the mind. If you are not regular in meditation, if your dispassion wanes, if you become careless and non-vigilant, the spiritual road will be washed away by the flood of impure thoughts and evil Vasanas. Therefore, be regular in your meditation. Regularity in meditation is of paramount importance.

You must be very regular in your practice. Then only you will succeed. Regularity in meditation is a great desideratum. Rapid progress and great success can be attained if regularity is observed by the practitioner. Even if you do not realise any tangible result in the practice, you must plod on in the practice with sincerity, earnestness, patience and perseverance. You will get success after sometime. There is no doubt of this. Do not stop the practice even for a day, under any circumstance.

Meditate, meditate. Concentrate, concentrate, my dear friends. Never miss even a single day owing to laziness. Laziness is the greatest enemy of a Sadhaka. Life is short, time is fleeting and obstacles are many in the spiritual path. Conquer them one by one by exertion and prayer. If you are sincere, you will get various sorts of help from within, from without, from the helpers of the astral plane, from Jivanmuktas who are scattered in all parts of the world and from Amara Purushas such as Sri Vyasa, Vasishtha, Kapila Muni, Dattatreya of Girnar Hills and Agastya Muni of Pothigai Hills, Tirunelveli.

Just as you take food four times—morning, noon, afternoon and night—so also you will have to meditate four times a day if you want to realise quickly. You must be systematic in your meditation. You must chalk out a Dinacharya, a daily routine, and follow it strictly. Irregularity in Sadhana cannot produce the desired result. Leniency to the mind will upset the whole programme. You must be regular in your Sadhana with asinine patience, adamantine will, firm determination and unshakable faith. Then success is certain.

If interruption comes in your Sadhana, make up the deficiency or loss in the evening or at night or on the following morning. Meditation is the only valuable asset for you. Success in Yoga is possible only if the aspirant practises profound and constant meditation. He must practise self-restraint at all times, because all of a sudden the senses may become turbulent. That is the reason why Lord Krishna advises Arjuna: "O son of Kunti, the excited senses of even a wise man, though he be striving, impetuously carry away his mind. Such of the roving senses as the mind yieldeth to hurry away the understanding just as the gale hurries away a ship upon the waters". (Gita, 11—60, 67)

Constant Practice Indispensable for Success

Great Rishis and sages of yore like Yajnavalkya and Uddalaka acquired the Knowledge of the Self, which is a means to secure the highest communion, through intense meditation.

The wise cut asunder the knot of egoism by that sharp sword of constant meditation. Then dawns supreme Knowledge of the Self or full inner Illumination or Self-realisation. The liberated sage has neither doubts nor delusion now. All the bonds of Karma are rent asunder. Therefore be ever engaged in meditation. This is the master-key for opening the realms of eternal bliss. It may be tiring and disgusting in the beginning, because the mind will be running away from the point every now and then. After some practice it will be focussed in the Centre. You will be immersed in the divine bliss.

What does a passionate man do? He repeats the same ignominious act again and again and fills his stomach as many times as he can. What does an aspirant with burning passion for Self-realisation do? He takes a little milk and repeats the process of meditation again and again the whole day and night and enjoys the eternal bliss of the Self. Both are busy in their own way. The former is caught in the wheel of births and deaths and the latter attains immortality. The mind can be controlled by continuous practice. You must keep it always occupied in divine contemplation. If you slacken your efforts, idle thoughts will at once enter. Continuous practice only can bring the mind under control easily.

Put a piece of iron rod in the blazing furnace. It becomes red like fire. Remove it. It loses its red colour. If you want to keep it always red, you must keep it always in the fire. Even so, if you want to keep the mind charged with the fire of Brahmic wisdom, you must keep it always in contact or touch with the Brahmic fire of knowledge through constant and intense meditation. You must keep up an unceasing flow of the Brahmic consciousness. Then only you will have the Sahaja Avastha or the natural state. Constant effort or ceaseless striving is necessary if you want to realise God. Vasanas, desires and Trishnas and old worldly Samskaras are obstacles in the path. The inner battle has to be fought again and again.

21

VIKSHEPA OR TOSSING OF THE MIND

Just as heat is inseparable from fire, Vikshepa or tossing of the mind is inseparable from the mind. It troubles the Sadhakas a lot. It destroys all on a sudden the determinations of strong-willed persons also. The mind ceases to exist if it is destitute of this oscillation. This fluctuating mind alone creates the universe. Even Mala or impurity can be removed easily. It demands strenuous efforts for a protracted time on the part of the Sadhaka to remove this Vikshepa.

You cannot enjoy peace of mind and practise meditation if there is Vikshepa in your mind. Vikshepa is excessive tossing of the mind from one object to another object. This is the excessive monkey-nature of the mind. This is an old habit of the mind. This is distraction of the mind. All Sadhakas generally complain of this trouble. The mind never stays at a fixed point for a long time. It jumps hither and thither like a monkey. It is always restless. This is due to the force of Rajas. Vikshepa and desire co-exist in the mind.

Scents, soft beds, novel reading, dramas, theatre, cinema, vulgar music, dancing, flowers, the company of women, Rajasic diet—all these excite passions and cause disturbance of the mind. Too much salt, too much chillies, too much sweets cause intense thirst and disturb meditation. Too much talking, too much walking and too much mixing disturb the mind in meditation.

Impulses disturb meditation. All obscure subconscious impulses should be controlled by the intellect and the will. Sex impulse and ambition are two real disturbing factors in meditation. They carry on guerilla warfare. They attack the Sadhakas again and again. They appear to be thinned out for sometime. They get revived often. They should be extirpated by great efforts, Vichara, Viveka and Sivoham-bhavana.

It is sound that sets the mind in motion. It is sound that makes the mind to think. Sound disturbs the mind a great deal in meditation. A sound with meaning disturbs more than a sound without meaning. A continuous sound as the silent murmur of a river is not so disturbing as an abrupt, sudden, sharp, broken sound. The mind does not feel a sound when it is used to it. You feel only when the clock stops.

Whenever Sri Jaya Dayal Goenka came to me for an interview, he used to put always two questions: "Swamiji, what is the remedy to control sleep? How to remove Vikshepa? Give me an easy and effective method". My answer was: "Take light diet at night. Do Sirshasana and Pranayama. Have deep meditation. Sleep can be conquered. Trataka, Upasana and Pranayama will remove Vikshepa". Patanjali Maharshi prescribes Pranayama for destroying Rajas which induces Vikshepa and for getting an one-pointed mind.

If you remove the oscillations of the mind, you get one-pointedness or Ekagrata. Ekagrata is a thing unknown to many. Max Mueller writes: "It is impossible for us when our minds are diverted in various directions through newspapers, telegrams, postal communications, etc." Ekagrata is an indispensable condition in all religious and philosophical speculations and in Nididhyasana.

It is desire that makes the mind restless. The Indriyas run after objects and the mind also follows the Indriyas just as a dog follows the master. The rays of the mind get scattered on sensual objects.

Therefore, if you want to check this wandering mind, you will have to renounce all sorts of desires and control the

Indriyas first. Then alone you will be successful in the practice of concentration, meditation, will culture, memory culture and thought culture. I have come across several educated people during the course of my lecture tour in the United Provinces, the Punjab, Kashmir and the Andhra Desa. They used to ask me: "Dear Swamiji, how to concentrate and meditate? We have been meditating for the last twelve years, yet we have not found any improvement". The obvious reason is that they have not been doing meditation in the right scientific manner. They have not purified themselves. They have not renounced the desires of this world. They have not disciplined their mind. Without having all this preliminary training and discipline, they are trying to achieve the impossible, viz., concentration. How can this be possible? This is something like trying to tie an infuriated elephant with a slender piece of silken thread.

In Gita Slokas 24 to 26 of Chapter VI, Lord Krishna prescribes a Sadhana for removing Vikshepa. It is the method of Pratyahara and Dharana. "Abandoning without reserve all desires born of the imagination by the mind, curbing in the aggregate of the senses on every side, little by little let him gain tranquillity by means of reason controlled by steadiness; having made the mind abide in the Self, let him not think of anything. As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self'.

Mark carefully the words of Sri Krishna's instructions: "All desires should be abandoned without reserve". Most of the Sadhakas or students keep some desires for their satisfaction. Some desires do lurk in the mind. Householders who practise concentration cannot leave some of their desires. They keep them for their secret gratification. Hence energy leaks; and they do not get any improvement. They rise up five steps and suddenly fall from the spiritual ladder. Perfect dispassion is necessary for checking the mind-wandering or mental oscillation.

The senses should be curbed on every side. Mark the words: "On every side". Control of one Indriya alone will not do. All the Indriyas should be controlled from every side. This also is another vital point. As the practice is difficult and tedious, you should not be discouraged. You will have to wait patiently for the results. Some people do practise by fits and starts. They practise concentration for six hours daily for three months. When they see that they have not found any tangible result in the shape of powers or Siddhis, they give up the practice. This is very, very bad. Hence Sri Krishna says: "Little by little do the practice, and be firm in the practice". Practice or Abhyasa consists in bringing the mind again and again back to the point, fixing it and concentrating it on the point or Lakshya. When the wandering mind becomes one-pointed, that state is called Ekagrata. It is single-mindedness.

If you can carefully watch the mind-wanderings, you will find that there is an intimate connection though the mind wildly wanders about like an unchained monkey. The law of association operates always, though the links are broken. The mind may think of a book, then the bookstall wherefrom Mr. John purchased it, then the friend whom he met at the railway station when he was purchasing, then of the railways and the directors of the railways who live in London. The thought of London may bring in the idea of skating. From skating, the mind may jump to the Alps. It may think of pine trees, consumption hospitals, open-air treatment. The thought of a pine tree will bring in the remembrance of Almora in India and its vicinity where pine trees grow. The thought of Almora will bring in the thought of Swami Vivekananda who founded the "Advaita Ashrama" at Mayavati, near Almora. The mind may entertain some divine ideas of concentration and meditation and of Advaita Brahman. Then, suddenly, it may drop into sensual grooves. It may think of the prostitutes in Almora. It will entertain lustful thoughts.

All these will take place within the twinkling of an eye. The mind works and moves with a tremendous speed that is impossible to imagine. It catches one object and fabricates one idea, and through association, it leaves this object and this idea and jumps to another object and another idea. There is a sort of concentration all throughout its wanderings, though the concentration is not a continuous one. When the thought runs in one definite groove continuously on one subject alone—like the flow of oil from one vessel to another—then it is concentration. The aspirant should withdraw his mind whenever it runs outside and put it in the same groove in the same line of thought on one subject and on one idea. This is spiritual Sadhana. This is Yogabhyasa. This is Dharana and Dhyana. This will result in Samadhi or the superconscious state, the fourth dimension or Turiya.

Just as you will have to take back with care your cloth that is fallen on a thorny plant by removing the thorns one by one slowly, so also, you will have to collect back with care and exertion the dissipated rays of the mind that are thrown over the sensual objects for very many years.

When the rays of the mind are scattered over diverse objects, you get pain. When the rays are gathered and collected by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get Ananda from within. When the mental rays are concentrated, illumination begins.

The mind is like a frightened bird. A hungry hawk chases a bird for its prey. The bird runs away and enters a room in a house for protection. It comes out. It is again chased by the hawk. Again the bird enters the room. Again it comes out. Again it is chased by the hawk. The bird is frightened and restless. Similar is the case with the mind in the beginning of meditation in beginners. It tries to go to the Yathasthana, the original seat, again comes out, flutters like the frightened bird from object to object. Again it moves a bit towards the heart, again it comes out. By constant and steady practice, you will have to withdraw the mind away from the sensual objects and fix it firmly on the Atman by incessant Nididhyasana.

Centralise your idea and develop thereby the inner power of the Self. Centralisation of ideas will stop the outgoing habit of the mind and will develop the powers of the mind. Centralisation of ideas means centralisation of your energy.

The mind-wandering will gradually cease through regular meditation. Suppose the mind runs outside during meditation forty times within one hour. If you can make it run only thirty-eight times, it is decidedly a great improvement. You have gained some control over the mind. It demands strenuous practice for a long time to check the mind-wandering. Vikshepa Sakti is very powerful. But Sattva is more powerful than Vikshepa Sakti. Increase your Sattva. You can very easily control this oscillation of the mind.

When you are firmly established in the idea that the world is unreal, Vikshepa through names and forms and Sphurana of Sankalpas will slowly vanish. Repeat constantly the formulae: "Brahman alone is real. The world is unreal. The Jiva is identical with Brahman". You will gain immense strength and peace of mind through the repetition.

22

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL THOUGHTS

Worldly thoughts will trouble you a lot in the beginning of your meditation. If you are regular in meditation, these thoughts will gradually die by themselves. Meditation is a fire to burn these thoughts. Do not try to drive all the worldly thoughts. Entertain thoughts concerning the object of meditation.

Watch your mind always very carefully. Be vigilant. Be on the alert. Do not allow waves of irritability, jealousy, anger, hatred and lust to arise in the mind. These dark waves are enemies of meditation, peace and wisdom. Suppress them at once by entertaining sublime and divine thoughts. Evil thoughts that have arisen may be destroyed by originating good thoughts and maintaining them, by repeating any Mantra or Name of the Lord, by thinking of any form of the Lord, by practice of Pranayama, by singing the Name of the Lord, by doing good actions, or by dwelling on the misery that arises from evil thoughts. When you attain the state of purity, no evil thoughts will arise in your mind. Just as it is easy to check the intruder or enemy at the gate, so also it is easy to overcome an evil thought as soon as it arises. Nip it in the bud. Do not allow it to strike deep root.

Just as you close your door or gate when a dog or an ass tries to come in, so also, close your mind before any evil thought can enter and produce an impression on your physical brain. You will become wise soon and attain eternal, infinite peace and bliss.

When you pass through the market of a big city, you will not be able to notice small sounds; but when you sit for common meditation with some of your friends in a quiet room in the morning, you will be able to detect even a little sneezing or coughing. Even so, you are not able to find out the evil thoughts when you are engaged in some work or the other, but you are able to detect them when you sit for meditation. Do not be afraid when evil thoughts pass through your mind when you sit for meditation. Do vigorous Japa and meditation. They will pass off soon.

An aspirant complains: "As I continue my meditation, layer after layer of impurities rise from the subconscious mind. Sometimes they are so strong and formidable that I am bewildered as to how to check them".

If evil thoughts enter the mind, do not use your will force in driving them. It is difficult to destroy the evil thoughts by attacking them directly. You will only lose your energy. You will only tax your will. You will fatigue yourself. The greater the efforts you make, the more the evil thoughts will return with redoubled force. They will return more quickly also. The thoughts will become more powerful. Be indifferent. Keep quiet. They will pass off soon. Or substitute good counter-thoughts through the Pratipaksha Bhavana method. Or think of the picture of God and the Mantra again and again forcibly or pray.

In the beginning of your practice of thought control, you will experience great difficulty. All sorts of evil thoughts will arise in your mind as soon as you sit for meditation. Why does this happen during meditation when you attempt to entertain pure thoughts? Aspirants leave their spiritual practices of meditation on account of this. If you try to drive a monkey, it attempts to pounce upon you with vengeance. Even so, the old evil Samskaras and old evil thoughts try to attack you with a vengeance and with redoubled force only at the time when you try to raise good, divine thoughts. Your enemy endeavours to resist you vehemently when you try to eject him out of your house. There is a law of resistance in nature. The old evil thoughts assert and say: "O man, do not be cruel. You have allowed us to stay in your mental house from time immemorial. We have every right to stay here. We have helped you up to this time in all your evil actions. Why do you want to oust us from our dwelling place? We will not vacate our abode". Do not be discouraged. Go on with your practice of meditation regularly. These evil thoughts will be thinned out. Eventually they will all perish.

Only when you sit for meditation, all sorts of evil thoughts will crop up. You will have to wage war with them. They will try their level best for their own existence. They will say, "We have every right to remain in this palace of mind. We have a sole monopoly from time immemorial to occupy this area. Why should we vacate our dominion now? We will fight for our birthright till the end". They will pounce upon you with great ferocity. As you attempt to suppress them, they want to attack you with redoubled force and vigour. But positive always overcomes the negative. This is the law of nature. Just as darkness cannot stand before the sun, just as a leopard cannot stand before the lion, so also, all these dark, negative thoughts, these invisible intruders, enemies of peace, cannot stand before the sublime thoughts. They must die by themselves.

Negative evil thoughts cannot stand before positive good thoughts. Courage overcomes fear. Patience overcomes anger and irritability. Love overcomes hatred. Purity overcomes lust. The very fact that you feel uneasy now when an evil thought comes to the surface of the mind during meditation indicates that you are growing in spirituality. In those days you consciously harboured all sorts of evil thoughts. You welcomed and nourished them. Persist in your spiritual practices. Be tenacious and diligent. You are bound to succeed. Even a dull type of aspirant will notice a marvellous change in himself if he keeps up the practice of Japa and meditation for 2 or 3 years in a continuous stream. Now he cannot leave the practice. If he stops his practice of meditation even for a day, he will actually feel that he has lost something on that day. His mind will get quite uneasy.

Suppose the evil thoughts stay in your mind for twelve hours and recur every third day. If you can make them stay for ten hours and recur once in a week by daily practice of concentration and meditation, that is a decided improvement. If you continue your practice, the period of stay and recurrence will be gradually lessened. Eventually the evil thoughts will disappear altogether. Compare your present state of mind with that of last year or the year before last. You will be able to find out your progress. The progress will be very slow in the beginning. It will be difficult for you to gauge your growth and progress.

Your mind will sometimes shudder when evil thoughts enter your mind. This is a sign of your spiritual progress. You are growing spiritually. You will be much tormented when you think of your evil actions committed in the past. This also is a sign of your spiritual upheaval. You will not repeat now the same actions. Your mind will tremble. Your body will quiver whenever a wrong Samskara of some evil action urges you to do the same act through force of habit. Continue your meditation with full vigour and earnestness. All memories of evil actions, all evil thoughts, all evil promptings of Satan will die by themselves. You will be established in perfect purity and peace.

23

SUBSTRATUM AWAKENINGS IN THE MIND

The external objects are continuously acting upon the brain. The sense-impressions reach the brain through sense avenues and produce mental stimuli. Now you are conscious of the external objects. Consciousness may be caused by an awakening either by external stimulus, i.e., a stimulus from a sense-impression, or an internal stimulus through memory. Each simple sense-impression is a highly complex bundle of afferent stimuli. "Afferent stimuli" means stimuli that are carried from outside towards the brain. An internal stimulus is an awakening in the substratum of the mind. The associations of awakenings which arise from a single sense-impression are very complex.

When you meditate, disregard the substratum awakenings in the mind that arise out of the senses. Avoid carefully the comparisons with all other cross-references and memories of ideas. Concentrate the whole energy of the mind on the one idea of God or Atman itself without any comparison with any other idea.

Avoid all other sense-impressions and ideas. Prevent the complications that arise out of correlated actions in the substratum of the mind. Concentrate the mind on the one idea alone. Shut out all other processes of mentation. Now the whole mind will be filled with the one idea only. Nishtha will ensue. Just as the recurrence or repetition of a thought or action leads to the perfection of that thought or action, so also, the recurrence of the same process or the same idea leads to the perfection of abstraction, concentration and meditation.

Force of Old Samskaras

When the aspirant does intense Sadhana to obliterate the old Samskaras, they try to rebound upon him with a vengeance and with redoubled force. They take forms and come before him as stumbling blocks. The old Samskaras of hatred, enmity, jealousy, feelings of shame, respect, honour and fear assume grave forms. Samskaras are not imaginary non-entities. They turn into actualities when opportunities crop up. The aspirant should not be discouraged. They will lose their force after sometime and die by themselves. Just as the dying wick burns with intensity before it gets extinguished, so also, those old Samskaras show their teeth and force before they are eradicated. The aspirant should not get unnecessarily alarmed. He will have to increase the force of momentum of spiritual Samskaras by doing Japa, Dhyana, Svadhyaya, virtuous actions, Satsanga and cultivation of Sattvic virtues. These new spiritual Samskaras will neutralise the old vicious Samskaras. The aspirant should be intent on his Sadhana. He should plunge himself into his spiritual practices. This is his Kartavya or duty.

When you sit again for meditation in the evening, you will have to struggle hard to wipe out the new worldly Samskaras that you have gathered during the course of the day and get a calm one-pointed mind again. This struggle brings in headache. The Prana which moves inwards in different grooves and channels and which is subtle during meditation has to move in new and different channels during worldly activities. It becomes very gross during work. During meditation, the Prana is taken up to the head.

Forget the Past and the Future

When you climb the ladder of Yoga, when you walk in the spiritual path, do not look back, do not remember your past experiences, kill all memory of your past experiences. Build up your mental Bhava of Brahman strongly. Strengthen it. Generate again and again the Brahmakara Vritti. Keep it steady by regular and constant meditation. A single thought of your past experience will give a new lease of life to the thought-image or memory-picture, rejuvenate and strengthen it, and will pull you down. It will be difficult for you to climb up again.

If the memory of past experiences recurs again and again, the old mental images will be energized or galvanised. They will express themselves with redoubled force again and again. They will crowd together or come in packs or in multitudes or in a party and attack you with formidable vehemence. Therefore, look not back. Destroy the memory of past experiences by remembering God.

When you sit for meditation, thoughts of your friends and office work, and memory of the conversations that took place the previous evening with your friends and relatives will disturb your mind and cause distraction. You will have to withdraw the mind again and again cautiously from these extraneous worldly thoughts and fix it again and again on your Lakshya or point. You will have to disregard and ignore the worldly thoughts. Be indifferent. Do not welcome these thoughts. Do not identify yourself with these thoughts or ideas. Say within yourself: "I do not want these thoughts. I have nothing to do with these thoughts". They will vanish gradually.

Concern yourself with the present only. Do not look upon the past or the future. Then alone you will be really happy. You will be free from cares, worries and anxieties. You will have a long life. Destroy the Sankalpas through strenuous efforts. Meditate ceaselessly upon that Sat-chit-ananda Brahman.

Exercise Vichara and Viveka in your attempts. Do not think of the past and the future. The past days of boyhood, your days of schooling, are all a dream when you are at forty. The whole life is a Deergha Svapna, a long dream. The past is a dream to you now. The future also will be the same hereafter. You will have to deal with the present only. You will have to cut down the two wings of the mind-bird, the two wings representing the past and the future. But it will flutter about as there is the 'present'. Keep off all external impressions. Stop the Vrittis. Silence the mind. Restrain the modifications of the mind. Concentrate. Overcome the multiplicity of ideas that result from the impressions. Give now a good food for the mind—some sublime thoughts of the Bhagavad Gita, the Avadhuta Gita, the meaning of OM—to reflect upon. After sometime, the luring present also will vanish. The mind will become perfectly serene and tranquil.

Practise Introspection

You should know the ways and habits of the mind through daily introspection, self-analysis or self-examination. You should have a knowledge of the laws of the mind. Then it will be easy for you to check the mind-wandering. When you sit for meditation, when you deliberately attempt to forget the worldly objects, all sorts of worldly thoughts, irrelevant and nonsensical thoughts, will crop up in your mind and disturb your meditation. You will be quite astonished. Old thoughts which you entertained several years ago, old memories of past enjoyments will bubble up and force the mind to wander in all directions. You will find that the trap-door of the vast magazine of thoughts and memories within the subconscious mind is opened or the lid of the storehouse of thoughts within is lifted up and the thoughts gush out in a continuous stream. The more you attempt to still them, the more they will bubble up with redoubled force and strength.

During introspection you can clearly observe the shiftings of the mind from one line of thought to another. Herein lies a chance for you to mould the mind properly and direct the thoughts and the mental energy in the divine channel. You can rearrange the thoughts and make new associations on a new Sattvic basis. You can throw out useless worldly thoughts just as you remove the weeds and throw them out. You can cultivate sublime divine thoughts in the divine garden of your mind or Antahkarana. This is a very patient work. This is a stupendous task indeed. But, for a Yogi of self-determination who has the grace of the Lord and iron will, it is nothing.

Meditation on the Immortal Self will act like a dynamite and blow up all thoughts and memories in the subconscious mind. If the thoughts trouble you much, do not suppress them by force. Be a silent witness as in a bioscope. They will subside gradually. Then try to root them out through regular silent meditation.

Do not be discouraged. *Nil desperandum.* Never despair. Through regular and constant meditation you can purify the subconscious mind and control all thoughts and memories. The fire of meditation will burn all thoughts. Be sure of this. Meditation is a potent antidote to annihilate the poisonous worldly thoughts. Be assured of this.

The practice must be constant. Then only one can attain Self-realisation surely and quickly. He who practises meditation by fits and starts for a few minutes daily will not be able to achieve any tangible result in Yoga.

24

SOCIAL FACTORS THAT IMPEDE MEDITATION

Be careful in the selection of your companions. Undesirable persons easily shake your faith and belief. Have full faith in your spiritual preceptor and in the Sadhana which you are pursuing. Never allow your own convictions to be changed. Continue your Sadhana with zeal and enthusiasm. You will have quick spiritual progress and you will ascend the spiritual ladder step by step and reach the goal ultimately.

A social nature is good for doing Karma Yoga. But it is extremely bad for practising Dhyana Yoga. It drags you out. It makes your mind restless. It invites many friends who disturb you in a variety of ways.

The so-called friends are your real enemies. You cannot find even a single, unselfish friend in this universe. Your real friend in need who attends on you sincerely is God, the Indweller of your heart. Worldly friends come to you to get money and other comforts when you are rolling in Rolls Royce, when you have got plenty of money. When you are in adverse circumstances, no one will care to look at you. Even your sons and wife will forsake you. This world is full of avarice, hypocrisy, double-dealing, flattery, untruth, cheating and selfishness. Be careful. Friends come to have idle talks with you and they waste your time. They want to pull you down and make you also worldly. They will say: "Dear, what are you doing? Earn as much money as possible. Live comfortably now. Eat, drink and be merry. Let us go to talkies. Today there is a good new American Hollywood production running at the Royal Theatre. There is a beautiful American dance. Who knows about the future?

Where is God? Where is heaven? There is no rebirth. There is no Mukti. It is all Gup and gossip of Pundits. Enjoy now. Why do you fast? There is nothing beyond this world. Give up all Sadhana and meditation. You are wasting your time". You will get such sort of advice from your worldly friends. Do not be carried away by the flowery speech of such friends. Cut off all connections ruthlessly. Do not talk to any of your friends, however sincere they may be. Hide yourself always. Live alone at all times. Trust in that Immortal Friend who dwells in your heart. Then alone you will be perfectly safe. He will give you whatever you want. Hear His sweet counsel from within with one-pointed mind and follow.

Useless Discussions

Some people in whom the reason has developed have got the habit of entering into unnecessary controversies and discussions. They have got Tarkika Buddhi. They cannot remain quiet even for a second. They will create opportunities for heated debates. Too much discussion ends in enmity and hostility. Much energy is wasted in useless discussions. Intellect is a help if it is used in the right direction of Atmic Vichara. Intellect is a hindrance if it is used in unnecessary discussions. Intellect takes the aspirant to the threshold of intuition. Thus far and no further. Reason helps in inferring the existence of God and finding out suitable methods for Self-realisation. Intuition transcends reason, but does not contradict reason. Intuition is direct perception of Truth. There is no reasoning here. Reasoning concerns matters of the physical plane. Wherever there is a 'why' and a 'wherefore', there is reasoning. In transcendental matters which are beyond the reach of reason, reason is of no use.

Intellect helps a lot in reflection and ratiocination, but people in whom reasoning is highly developed become sceptical. Their reason becomes perverted also. They lose faith in the Vedas and in the teachings of Mahatmas. They say, "We are rationalists. We cannot believe anything which does not appeal to our reason. We do not believe the Upanishads. We reject anything that does not come within the domain of reason. We have no faith in God and Satgurus". These so-called rationalists are a type of atheists only. It is very difficult to convince them. They have an impure, perverted reason. Thoughts of God cannot enter their brains. They will not do any kind of spiritual Sadhana. They say, "Show us your Brahman of the Upanishads or Isvara of the Bhaktas". Those who are of doubting nature will perish. Reason is a finite instrument. It cannot explain many mysterious problems of life. Those who are free from the so-called rationalism and scepticism can march in the path of God-realisation.

Give up arguing. Become silent. Look within. All doubts will be cleared. You will get a flash of divine knowledge. The pages of the internal book of divine knowledge will be clearly revealed to you. Practise this and feel.

Aspirants should not indulge in sundry talks and miscellaneous thoughts just to ease the mind. They should be serious. They should think and talk of God alone.

Lingual Diarrhoea

Too much talking is one of the bad habits which lessen the spiritual power. Too much talking is Rajasic nature. If a man talks too much, he suffers from diarrhoea of the tongue. Quiet people cannot sit even for a second in the company of such loquacious or garrulous people. The latter will talk five hundred words per second. There is an electric talking-dynamo in their tongue. They are restless people. If you lock these people for a day in a solitary room, they will die.

Much energy is wasted by too much talking. Speech is Tejomaya Vak according to Chhandogya Upanishad. The gross portion of fire goes to constitute bone, the middle portion to form marrow, and the subtle portion to form speech. So, speech is a very powerful energy. Remember this, remember this, remember this always. Observe Mauna for 3 months, 6 months or one year. If you cannot observe Mauna continuously for months, observe for a day in a week just as Sri Mahatma Gandhiji did. The energy that is spent in talking must be conserved and utilised for divine contemplation.

The Vak Indriya distracts the mind considerably. A talkative man cannot dream of having peace even for a short time. You should speak measured words only. Great peace comes by the observance of Mauna. An aspirant should talk only a few words when necessary and that too on spiritual matters only. A talkative man is unfit for the spiritual path.

Practise Mauna daily for two hours and especially during meals. On Sundays observe full Mauna for 24 hours. Do a lot of Japa and meditation during Mauna. The Mauna that is observed during meditation cannot be taken as a vow of silence. Then, sleep also should be taken as Mauna. Mauna should be observed by householders at such a time when there are great opportunities for talking and when visitors come to meet them. Then only the impulse of speech can be checked.

Evil Company

The effects of evil company are highly disastrous. The aspirant should shun all sorts of evil company. The mind is filled with bad ideas by contact with evil companions. The little faith that the aspirant has in God and scriptures will vanish. A man is known by the company he keeps. Birds of the same feather flock together. These are all proverbs or wise maxims. They are quite true. Just as a nursery is to be well fenced in the beginning for protection against cows, etc., so also, a neophyte should protect himself very carefully from evil influences from without. Otherwise, he is ruined totally. The company of those who speak lies, who commit adultery, theft, cheating, double-dealing, who are greedy, who indulge in idle talks, backbiting and tale-bearing, who have no faith in God and in the scriptures, should be strictly avoided. The company of women and of those who associate with women is dangerous for a Sadhaka.

Bad surroundings, obscene pictures, vulgar songs, novels that deal with love, cinema, theatre, the sight of pairing of animals, words which give rise to bad ideas in the mind, in short, anything that causes evil thoughts in the mind can be termed as evil company.

Newspapers deal with all sorts of worldly topics. Aspirants should entirely give up reading of newspapers. Reading of newspapers kindles worldly Samskaras, causes sensational excitement in the mind, makes the mind outgoing, produces an impression that the world is a solid reality and makes one forget the Truth that lies underneath these names and forms.

Wealth

Wealth is evil. Artha is really Anartha. To earn wealth is painful. To protect the wealth is still more painful. If the wealth is reduced, it is also painful. If it is lost, it gives unbearable pain. You cannot earn and amass wealth without doing great sins. Wealth brings much anxiety. Therefore, shun wealth.

Retired officers remain on the banks of the Ganga and practise Japa and meditation for several years, but they do not make any solid progress. Why? Because they utilise their big pension for themselves and for their sons and daughters. They do not spend it in charity. They depend upon money for everything. Let them spend all their money in charity and rely on God. Let them live on Bhiksha. They will surely have solid spiritual progress.

The student of Yoga should not possess much wealth as it will drag him to the worldly temptations. He can keep a little sum to meet the wants of the body. Economic independence will free the mind from anxieties and enable him to continue the Sadhana uninterruptedly.

25

EVIL QUALITIES THAT HINDER MEDITATION

Lust

Wastage of semen brings nervous weakness, exhaustion and premature death. The sexual act destroys vigour of mind, body and Indriyas and annihilates memory, understanding and the intellect.

Semen is a dynamic force. It should be converted into Ojas or spiritual energy by pure thoughts, Japa and meditation. Those who are very eager to have God-realisation should observe unbroken celibacy strictly. Householders break their vows owing to their weakness and hence do not find much advancement in the spiritual path. They rise two steps in the spiritual ladder and fall down immediately to the ground by lack of celibacy. This is a sad mistake. They should sleep separately. They should be very serious. They should understand clearly the gravity of the situation. No spiritual progress is possible without the practice of celibacy.

Observe the vow of Brahmacharya strictly. Let your wife also understand and realise the importance and glory of Brahmacharya. Get for her religious books for daily study. Ask her to fast on Ekadasi and to do Japa daily. Take refuge in God's Name and Japa. All obstacles will be removed.

Anger

It is a gate to hell. Just as milk is changed into curd, so also lust or desire becomes transmuted into anger. When a man's desire is not gratified, he becomes angry. Then his mind becomes confused. He loses his memory and understanding. He perishes.

A man, when he is angry, will talk anything he likes and do anything he likes. He commits murder. A hot word results in fighting and stabbing. He is under intoxication. He loses his senses for the time being. He does not know what he is exactly doing. He is a prey to anger. He is under the sway of anger.

Resentment, indignation, fury, wrath and irritation are all varieties of anger according to degree or intensity. If a man becomes irritable for trifling things very often, it is a definite sign of mental weakness. One should control irritability by developing patience, Vichara, Kshama, love, mercy and the spirit of service.

Too much loss of semen is the chief cause for irritability and anger. The root cause for anger lies in egoism. Through Vichara, egoism should be removed. Then only one can control anger completely to the very root. Through development of the opposite virtues such as Kshama, love, Santi, Karuna and friendship, it can be controlled to some extent. The force can be reduced. Jnana only completely fries all Samskaras. But, practice of Mauna is of great help in controlling anger.

Anger gains strength by repetition. If it is checked, man gains strength of will gradually. An aspirant should direct all his attention towards conquest of this powerful enemy. Sattvic food, Japa, meditation, prayer, Satsanga, Vichara, service, Kirtan, Brahmacharya, Praṇayama all will pave a long way in eradicating this dire malady. A combined method should be adopted in its removal. When a man abuses, try to keep quiet. Bear the insult. You will gain strength. Check the impulses and emotions to begin with. Whenever there is likelihood of a burst of anger during conversation or debate, stop your speech. Always try to speak sweet and soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard, but if the words are hard, it will bring discord. If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cool water immediately.

Chant OM loudly for 10 minutes. Smoking, meat-eating and drinking make the heart very irritable. Therefore they should be completely abandoned. Tobacco brings diseases of the heart. It gives rise to 'tobacco-heart' which gets easily irritated.

Do not cause pain or suffering to any living being through greed, selfishness, irritability and annoyance. Give up anger or ill-will. Give up the spirit of fighting, heated debates. Don't argue. If you quarrel with somebody or if you have a heated debate with anybody, you cannot meditate for 3 or 4 days. Your balance of mind will be upset. Much energy will be wasted in useless channels. The blood will become hot. The nerves will be shattered.

Be careful in the selection of your companions. Talk little. Mix little. Plunge yourself into spiritual Sadhana. Think that the world is a long dream, that the world is Mithya. This will prevent anger. Make Vichara: "What is abuse? What do I gain by getting angry? It is only wasting of energy and time. I am not the body. The Atman is the same in all". This will completely remove anger.

Greed

A greedy man has got great Moha for his money. His mind is always on the money box and the bunch of keys he has tied in his waist-cord. Money is his very blood and life. He lives to collect money. He is a gate-keeper only for his money. The enjoyer is his prodigal son. Money lenders are the favourite tools of our friend, greed. Greed has taken his stronghold in their minds. They are the Shylocks of the present day. They suck the blood of poor people by taking enormous interest—25%, 50% and even 100% at times. Cruel-hearted people! They pretend to show that they are of charitable disposition by doing acts such as opening Kshetras and building temples.

Such acts cannot neutralise their abominable sins and merciless deeds. Many poor families are ruined by these people. They do not think that the bungalows and palaces in which they live are built out of the blood of those poor people. Greed has destroyed their intellect and made them absolutely blind. They have eyes, but they see not. Greed always makes the mind restless. A man of one lakh of rupees plans to get ten lakhs. A millionaire schemes to become a multimillionaire. Greed is insatiable. There is no end to it. Greed assumes various subtle forms. A man thirsts for name and fame and applause. This is greed. A sub-judge thirsts to become a High Court judge. A third-class magistrate thirsts to become a first-class magistrate with full powers. This also is greed. A Sadhu thirsts to open several Ashrams in different centres. This also is greed. A greedy man is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. Destroy greed of all sorts by Vichara, devotion, meditation, Japa, Santosha, integrity, honesty and disinterestedness and enjoy peace.

Moha

Here comes another great obstacle to meditation and God-realisation which troubled even Sri Sankara. He had to attend the sick bed and funeral rites of his mother though he was a Sannyasin. A great sage, Pattinattu Swami of South India, sang when his mother died: "There was fire at first in Tripura Samhara. Then there was fire in Lanka by Hanuman. Now, the death of my beloved mother has caused burning fire in my stomach and heart. Let me also apply fire to this corpse of my mother."

Moha is infatuated love for one's own body, wife, children, father, mother, brothers, sisters and property. Moha, like greed, takes various subtle forms. The mind gets attached to one name and form or the other. If it is detached from one name and form, it clings tenaciously to another name and form.

Look at the Moha of monkeys. If the baby monkey dies, the mother monkey will carry the dead skeleton for two or three months. Such is the power of Moha! Mysterious is Maya! If the father receives a telegram that his only son is dead, he immediately gets a shock and faints. Sometimes he dies also. This is the power of Moha. The whole world runs through Moha. It is through Moha one is bound to the wheel of Samsara. One gets pain through Moha. Moha creates attachment. Moha is a kind of powerful liquor that brings intoxication in the twinkling of an eye. Even Sannyasins develop Moha for their Ashrams and disciples.

You never wept when millions of people died in the late war. But you weep bitterly when your wife dies. Why? Because you have Moha for her. Moha creates the idea of mine-ness. Therefore you say: "My wife, my son, my horse, my home". This is bondage. This is death. Moha creates infatuated love for sensual objects. Moha produces delusion and perverted intellect. Through the force of Moha you mistake the unreal, dirty body for the real, pure Atman; you take the unreal world as a solid reality. These are the functions of Moha. Moha is a strong weapon of Maya.

Moha should be eradicated by Viveka, Vairagya, Vichara, Atma Chintana, devotion, seclusion, study of Vedantic literature, etc. Moha can be removed *in toto* only by renunciation and Sannyasa and Self-realisation.

Pride

As soon as an aspirant gets some spiritual experiences or Siddhis, he is puffed up with vanity and pride. He thinks too much of himself. He separates himself from others. He treats others with contempt. He cannot mix with others. If anyone has some moral qualifications such as the spirit of service or self-sacrifice or Brahmacharya, he will say, "I am an Akhanda Brahmachari for the last twelve years. Who is pure like myself?

I lived on leaves and gram for four years. I have done service in an Ashram for ten years. No one can serve like myself”. Just as worldly people are puffed up with the pride of wealth, so also, Sadhus and aspirants are puffed up with their moral qualifications. This kind of pride also is a serious obstacle in the path of God-realisation. It must be eradicated thoroughly. As long as a man boasts of himself, so long he is the same little Jiva only. He cannot have Divinity.

Jealousy

This also is a great obstacle. Even Sadhus who have renounced everything, who live with one Kaupin only in the caves of Gangotri and Uttarkashi in the Himalayas, are not free from this evil Vritti. Sadhus are more jealous than the householders. Their hearts bum when they see some other Sadhu in a flourishing condition, when they notice that the neighbouring Sadhu is respected and honoured by the public. They try to vilify the neighbour and adopt methods for his destruction or elimination. What a sad sight! What a deplorable spectacle! Horrible to think! Dreadful to imagine! When the heart burns, how can you expect peace of mind?

Even highly educated people are very mean and petty-minded. Jealousy is the worst enemy of peace and Jnana. It is the strongest weapon of Maya. Aspirants should always be on the alert. They should not become slaves of name and fame and jealousy. If there is jealousy in a Sadhaka, he is a small, little being only. He is far from God. One should rejoice at the welfare of others. One should develop Mudita or complacency when he sees others in a prosperous condition. He should feel Atma-bhava in all beings. Jealousy assumes various forms such as Earshya, Asuya, Matsarya, etc. All forms of jealousy must be totally eradicated. Just as milk bubbles out again and again during the process of ebullition, so also, jealousy bursts out again and again. It must be entirely rooted out.

26

OTHER UNDESIRABLE TRAITS

Fear

This is a very great obstacle in the path of God-realisation. A timid aspirant is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. He cannot dream of Self-realisation even in one thousand births. One must risk the life if one wants to attain immortality. The spiritual wealth cannot be gained without self-sacrifice, self-abnegation. A fearless dacoit who has no Deha Adhyasa is fit for God-realisation. Only his current will has to be changed. Fear is an imaginary non-entity. It assumes solid forms and troubles the aspirant in various ways. If one conquers fear, he is on the road to success. He has almost reached the goal. Tantrika Sadhana makes the student fearless. There is one great advantage in this line. He has to undergo practices in the burial ground, by sitting over the dead body at midnight. This kind of Sadhana emboldens the student.

Fear assumes various forms. There is fear of death, fear of disease, scorpion-phobia, fear of solitude, fear of company, fear of losing something and fear of public criticism in the form of "What will people say of me?". Fear of public criticism stands in the way of the aspirant in his spiritual progress. He should stick to his own principles and own convictions, even though he is persecuted and even though he is on the point of being blown up at the mouth of a machine gun. Then only he will grow and realise.

One may not be afraid of the knife of a surgeon. One may submit himself fearlessly to extraction of a strong tooth without cocaine injection or to any operation without chloroform. One may not have any fear for wild animals in thick forests. He may move about fearlessly in thick jungles. One may not be afraid of the machine-gun in the battle-field. He may fearlessly expose his chest to the bullets. But such fearless people may be afraid of slight public criticism or a slight disease or the sight of a centipede or a snake.

It took me many years to understand thoroughly the secret subtle workings of the mind. Mind havocs through the power of imagination. Imaginary fears of various sorts, exaggeration, concoction, mental dramatisation and building castles in the air are all due to the power of imagination. Even a perfect healthy man has some imaginary disease or the other due to the power of imagination of the mind. Much energy is wasted on account of imaginary fears.

Fear drains the energy quickly. It destroys the vitality. It produces poverty of blood. It produces indigestion, headache and debility. It paralyses the brain and nerves. It makes one morose and gloomy. It retards growth, structure and nutrition. Extreme fear brings immediate death by causing heart-failure. When one meets a tiger face to face in the forest, the body becomes rigid and paralysed and the mind becomes like a log of wood. Thinking and reasoning vanish. The victim becomes dumb.

All aspirants suffer from this dire malady, fear. Fear of all sorts should be eradicated totally by Atma Chintana, Vichara, devotion and cultivation of the opposite quality, courage. By developing courage you can destroy fear. Auto-suggestion will help you a lot in removing fear. Pray and make perfect self-surrender. Have no attachment for this body. Cast it off just like a snake throws away its slough. Make up your mind to give up the body at any moment. Become absolutely fearless. Exhibit courage and manliness. Fearlessness is one of the important signs of a Jivanmukta. How blessed are they who have victory over fear!

How peaceful and strong are they who have triumph over fright!

Hatred

This is the deadliest foe of an aspirant. It is an inveterate enemy. It is an old-standing associate of the Jiva. Ghrina, contempt, prejudice, sneering, taunting, teasing, ridiculing, mocking, frowning and showing a wry face are all forms of hatred. Hatred bubbles out again and again. It is insatiable like lust or greed. It may temporarily subside for sometime and may again burst out with redoubled force. If the father dislikes a man, his sons and daughters also begin to hate that man without any rhyme or reason, although that man has not done them any wrong or injustice. Such is the force of hatred. If anyone even remembers the figure of a man who had done him some serious injury some forty years ago, at once hatred creeps into his mind and his face shows clear signs of enmity and hatred.

Hatred develops repetition of hatred-Vritti. Hatred ceases, not by hatred, but by love only. Hatred needs prolonged and intense treatment as its branches ramify in various directions in the subconscious mind. It lurks in different corners. Constant selfless service combined with meditation for a period of twelve years is necessary. An Englishman hates an Irishman and an Irishman hates an Englishman. A Catholic hates a Protestant and a Protestant hates a Catholic. This is religious hatred. There is communal hatred. One man hates another man at first sight without any reason. This is Svabhavika. Pure love is unknown in this world amongst worldly people. Selfishness, jealousy, greed and lust are retinues of hatred. In Kali Yuga, the force of hatred is augmented. A son hates his father and sues him in the court. The wife divorces her husband.

Pure unselfish love should be cultivated. One should have fear of God. Solomon says, "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". Service with Atma Bhava can remove hatred completely and bring in Advaitic realisation of oneness of life. Ghrina, prejudice and contempt will completely vanish by selfless service. Vedanta in daily life, when put into actual practice, can eradicate all sorts of hatred. There is one Self hidden in all beings. Then, why do you frown at others? Why do you treat others with contempt? Why do you divide and separate? Realise the unity of life and consciousness. Feel Atman everywhere. Rejoice and radiate love and peace everywhere.

Prejudice, Intolerance and Bigotry

Prejudice is unreasonable dislike for something or some person. Prejudice makes the brain callous. The brain cannot vibrate properly to grasp things in their true light. One cannot endure honest differences of opinion. This is intolerance. Religious intolerance and prejudice are great obstacles in the path of God-realisation. Some orthodox Sanskrit Pundits strongly think that only Sanskrit-knowing people will have God-realisation. They think that English-knowing Sannyasins are barbarians and they cannot have Self-realisation. Look at the thick foolishness of these bigoted Pundits! Incorrigible, petty-minded, narrow-hearted, crooked sectarians! If one has prejudice against Bible or Koran, he cannot grasp the truths of these books. His brain becomes hard, stony and callous. A man can realise by studying and following the principles that are laid down in Koran, Bible or Zend Avesta or the Pali books of Lord Buddha.

Sectarians and bigoted people confine themselves to a small circumscribed circle or area. They have no large heart. They cannot see the good points in others on account of their jaundiced vision. They think that their principles and doctrines only are good. They treat others with contempt. They think that their Sampradaya only is superior to that of others and that their Acharya only is a man of God-realisation. They always fight with others. There is no harm in praising one's own Guru and sticking to his principles and teachings. But one should pay equal regard to the teachings of other prophets and other saints. Then only the feeling of universal love and universal brotherhood will manifest. This will eventually lead to the realisation of God or Atman in all beings. Prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and sectarianism should be thoroughly eradicated. Prejudice and intolerance are forms of hatred.

Aspirants should try to remove prejudice of all sorts. Then only they can see truth everywhere. Truth is not the sole monopoly of the Sanskrit Pundits of Varanasi or the Vairagis of Ayodhya. Truth, Rama, Krishna, Jesus are the common property of all.

Backbiting

This is a dirty, abominable habit of petty-minded people. Almost all are victims of this dire malady. This has become an ingrained habit of narrow-hearted mischievous people. This is a Tamo-guna Vritti. The Lila of this world is kept up by this evil habit of man. It is Maya's strong weapon to spread restlessness throughout the world. If you see four men sitting in a group, think that some backbiting is surely going on there. If you behold that four Sadhus are talking, you can at once infer without any shadow of doubt that they are backbiting some person or the other. The Sadhu will be talking: "The food of that Kshetra is very bad. That Swamiji is a very bad man". Backbiting is more prevalent amongst the so-called Sadhus than amongst householders. Even educated Sannyasins and householders are not free from this dreadful disease. A real Sadhu who is engaged in contemplation will always be alone.

The root cause of backbiting is ignorance or jealousy. The backbiter wants to pull down or destroy the man who is in a prosperous condition by false vilification, slander, calumny and false accusation. There is no other work for a backbiter except scandal-mongering. He lives on backbiting. He takes pleasure in backbiting and mischief-making. This is his Svabhava. Backbiters are a menace to society. They are the worst criminals. They need capital punishment. Double-dealing, crookedness, diplomacy, chicanery, quibbling, tricks and artifices are the retinues of backbiting. A backbiter can never have a calm, peaceful mind. His mind will always be planning or scheming in wrong directions. An aspirant should be absolutely free from this dreadful vice. He should walk alone, live alone, eat alone and meditate alone. If a man who has not removed jealousy, backbiting, hatred, pride and selfishness says, "I am meditating for six hours daily", it is all nonsense. There is no hope of getting a meditative mood even for six minutes unless a man removes all these evil Vrittis and purifies his mind first by selfless service for six years.

Fault-finding

This is a detestable old habit of man. It clings to him tenaciously. The mind of the aspirant who always tries to poke his nose into the affairs of other men is always outgoing. How can he think of God when his mind is ever engaged in finding the faults of others? If you had spent even a fraction of the time that you have thus wasted in finding your own faults, you would have become a great saint by this time. Why do you care for the faults of others? Improve yourself first. Reform yourself first. Purify yourself first. Wash the impurities of your own mind. He who applies himself diligently to his spiritual practices cannot find even a single second to look into the affairs of others. If the fault-finding nature dies, there will be no occasion for criticising others. Much time is wasted in backbiting, tale-bearing and scandal-mongering. Time is most precious. We do not know when Lord Yama will take away our lives. Every second must be utilised in divine contemplation. Let the world have its own ways. Mind your own affairs. Clean your mental factory.

That man who does not interfere with others is the most peaceful man in the world.

Self-justification

This is a very dangerous habit for an aspirant. This is an old-standing habit. Self-assertion, self-sufficiency, obstinacy, dissimulation and speaking falsehood are the constant retinues or attendants of self-justification. He who has developed this trait can never improve himself as he will never admit his faults. He will always try his level best to justify himself in various ways. He will not hesitate to tell several lies to support his false statements. He will tell one lie to cover another lie and he will speak lies *ad infinitum.* The aspirant should always admit his faults, mistakes and weaknesses, then and there. Then only he can improve quickly.

Religious Hypocrisy

There are as many fashions in Sadhus as there are in worldly persons. Just as hypocrisy prevails in the worldly persons, so also, hypocrisy manifests in aspirants, Sadhus and Sannyasins who have not completely purified the lower nature. They pretend to be what they are not in reality. They pose as big Mahatmas and Siddha Purushas when they do not know even the alphabet of Yoga or spirituality. They put on serious Sunday faces which some Christian missionaries sometimes assume on Sabbath days. This is a dangerous Vritti. They cheat others. They boast and brag too much of themselves. They do mischief wherever they go. They practise hypocrisy to get respect, honour, good food and clothing and to cheat credulous simpletons. There is no greater crime than trading in religion. This is a capital sin. Householders can be excused. But we cannot excuse the aspirants and Sadhus who are treading the path of spirituality and who have renounced everything for God-realisation. Religious hypocrisy is more dangerous than the hypocrisy of worldly persons. A long drastic course of treatment is needed for its eradication. A religious hypocrite is very far away from God. He cannot dream of God-realisation. Thick Tilakas, elaborate painting of the forehead and wearing of too many Tulasi and Rudraksha Maalas on the neck, arms, forearms and ears are some of the external signs of religious hypocrisy.

Name and Fame

One can renounce even wife, son and property, but it is difficult to renounce name and fame. Pratishtha is established name and fame. This is a great obstacle in the path of God-realisation. This brings downfall in the end. This does not allow the aspirant to march forward in the spiritual path. The aspirant becomes a slave of respect and honour. As soon as the aspirant gets some purity and ethical progress, ignorant people flock to him and pay homage and salutations. The aspirant gets puffed up with pride. He thinks he is a great Mahatma now. He becomes eventually a slave of his admirers. He cannot notice his slow downfall. The moment he mixes up freely with householders, he loses what little he had gained during eight or ten years. He cannot influence the public now. The admirers also leave him because they do not find any solace or influence in his company.

The people imagine that the Mahatma has got Siddhis and they can get wealth and children through his grace, and roots for removal of diseases. They always approach a Sadhu with various motives. The aspirant, through bad association, loses his Vairagya and Viveka. Attachment and desires crop up now in his mind. Therefore an aspirant should hide himself always. Nobody should know what sort of Sadhana he is doing. He should never attempt to exhibit any Siddhi. He should be very humble. He should pass for quite an ordinary man. He should not accept any rich present from householders. He will be affected by the bad thoughts of those who offer presents. He should never think that he is superior to anybody. He should always treat others with respect. He should not treat others with contempt. Then only respect will come by itself. He should treat respect, honour, name and fame as dung or poison. He should wear disrespect and dishonour as a golden necklace. Then only he will reach the goal safely.

Building Ashrams and making disciples bring about the downfall of the aspirant. They also are stumbling blocks in the path of God-realisation. The aspirant becomes another sort of householder. He develops institutional egoism. He gets attached to the Ashram and disciples. He gets Mamata or mine-ness for the building and Chelas. He has the same cares, worries and anxieties for running the Ashram and the magazine and for feeding his disciples. He develops slave mentality and weak will. He has to flatter the donors and appeal for funds very often. How can thoughts of God remain in his mind when he has his mind fixed on collection of money and on developing the Ashram?

Keep quiet. Do meditation. Evolve yourself. Mind your own business. Reform yourself first. How can you help others when you yourself grope in darkness, when you are blind? How can a blind man lead another blind man? Both will fall in the deep abyss and break their legs.

Power, name, fame and wealth stiffen the ego. They strengthen the personality. Hence, renounce them if you want to attain Immortality and Eternal Peace.

Ambition and Desire

Ambitious objects, desires and various disturbing thoughts are other obstacles. Destroy desires by Vichara, control of the Indriyas, Vairagya, Viveka and Brahmacharya. Do not plan. Do not imagine. Do not try to fulfil them. Be indifferent. Annihilate emotion. Do not be attached to desires. Desires are powerless in the absence of emotions and attachment. They dwindle and die. Find out the causes of disturbing thoughts and remove them one by one. Watch the mind carefully. Dwell in solitude. Do not mix. Have patience, Utsaha and courage.

Whenever desires trouble you, try to attain Vairagya by looking into the defects of sensual life. Cultivate dispassion or indifference to sensual pleasures. Think that enjoyment produces pain and various troubles and that everything is perishable. Withdraw the mind again and again from the objects and fix it on the Immortal Self or the picture of the Lord. When the mind attains a state of equanimity, when it is freed from distraction and Laya, do not disturb it.

Lower Nature

The petty, obstinate egoism which actuates the human personality is a serious obstacle in meditation or the path of Self-realisation. This little self-arrogating principle supports its surface thoughts and dominates its habitual ways of feeling, character and action. This is Rajasic and Tamasic egoism which conceals or covers the higher, divine, Sattvic nature. It veils the self-luminous immortal Soul or Atman.

You may have aspiration for the Truth. You may be endowed with devotion. You may possess a will to overcome the obstacles and hostile forces. If the little ego asserts or persists, if the external personality has not consented to change or transformation, you cannot have rapid progress in the spiritual path.

The lower nature must be thoroughly regenerated. The habitual lower personality of the Sadhaka must be entirely changed. If this is not done, any spiritual experience or power is of no value. If this little ego or human personality persists in retaining its petty, limited, selfish, ignoble, false and stupid human consciousness, any amount of Tapas or Sadhana will bear no fruit. This means that you do not really thirst for God-realisation. It is nothing more than idle curiosity. The aspirant says to the preceptor, "I want to practise Yoga. I want to enter into Nirvikalpa Samadhi. I want to sit at your feet"; but he does not want to change his lower nature and old habits. He wants to have his own ways and old habits, old character, behaviour and conduct.

If the aspirant or Yogic student declines to change his petty, lower nature or if he refuses even to admit the need for any change of his lower, habitual personality, he can never make even an iota of real spiritual advancement. Any partial or temporary elevation, slight occasional aspiration during some exalted moments, any momentary spiritual opening within, without any true or radical transformation of the lower nature or habitual little personality, is of no practical value.

The force of habit is ever strong and inveterate. It demands great strength of will. The aspirant often feels helpless against the force of old habits. He will have to develop his Sattva and will to a considerable degree by regular Japa, Kirtan, meditation, untiring selfless service and Satsanga. He must introspect and find out his own defects and weaknesses. He must live under the guidance of his Guru. The Guru finds out his defects and points out suitable ways to eradicate them.

Yoga can be practised only by those who are very earnest about it and who are ready to annihilate their little ego and its demands. Yoga cannot be practised if you cling to your old little self, old habits, old unregenerate self-assertive lower nature.

You cannot lead a double life at the same time. Pure divine life, the life of Yoga, cannot co-exist with the mundane life of passion and ignorance. Divine life cannot conform to your own little standards. You must rise above the petty human level. You must raise yourself to a higher level of divine consciousness. You cannot claim freedom for your petty mind and little ego if you want to become a Yogi. You should not affirm your own thoughts, judgement, desires and impulses. The lower nature with its retinue, viz., arrogance, ignorance and turbulence stands in the way of descent of the divine light.

Become a true, sincere aspirant in the path of Yoga. Kill this lower nature by developing the higher divine nature. Soar high. Get yourself ready for the descent of the divine light. Purify and become a dynamic Yogi.

May the blessings of great Yogins be upon you all!

27

STATES OF MIND THAT STALL PROGRESS

Fickleness

Fickleness of mind is a great obstacle in meditation. Light Sattvic diet and the practice of Pranayama will remove this state of mind. Do not overload the stomach. Walk briskly in your compound hither and thither for half an hour. As soon as you have made a firm resolve, you must carry it out promptly at any cost. This will remove fickleness of mind and develop your will-power.

Vishaya Asakti

This is the greatest of all obstacles. The mind refuses to leave completely the sensual pleasures. Through the force of Vairagya and meditation, the desires get suppressed for sometime. All on a sudden the mind thinks of sensual pleasures through the force of habit and memory. There arises mental disturbance. Concentration decreases. The mind moves outwards in sensual objects.

Some desires lurk in the corners of the mind. Just as old dirt in the corners of the room comes out when you sweep, so also, through the pressure of Yogic practices, these old lurking desires come out to the surface of the mind with redoubled force. The Sadhaka should be very careful. He should be ever watching the mind vigilantly. He must nip the desires in the bud by developing his Vairagya and Viveka and increasing the period of Japa and meditation. He must observe Akhanda Mauna and do vigorous meditation and Pranayama. He should live on milk and fruits for forty days. He should observe fast on Ekadasi days. He should completely give up mixing with anybody. He should never come out of the room. He should plunge himself deep in his Sadhana.

Kashaya

Kashaya means hidden Vasanas. It is Goodha Vasana, hidden subtle desire. It is the subtle influence in the mind produced by enjoyment and left there to fructify in time to come and distract the mind from Samadhi. This is a serious obstacle to meditation. It does not allow the Sadhaka to enter into Samadhi-Nishtha. It induces the subtle memory of pleasures enjoyed. It is hidden Vasana. From the Samskara, Vasana originates. Samskara is the cause and Vasana is the effect. It is a kind of impurity of mind.

Kashaya means colouring. Raga, Dvesha and Moha are the Kashaya or colouring of the mind. Constant Vichara coupled with Brahma-bhavaṇa is the only potent remedy to eradicate this dire malady Kashaya.

Laya

Laya is sleepiness. Wake up the mind in Laya. Even though you have conquered Laya and distraction by repeated practice of Vairagya and Jnanabhyasa of Brahma Chintana, yet the mind will not enter a state of perfect balance or serenity. It will be in an intermediate stage. The mind is still not freed from Raga or attachment which is the seed of all its activity in the direction of external objects. There is still lurking passion or hidden Vasanas or Kashaya. You will have to restrain the mind again and again by Vichara and do rigorous meditation and practise Samprajnata or Savikalpa Samadhi. Finally, you must rest yourself in Asamprajnata or Nirbija Samadhi.

Rasasvada

Rasasvada is another kind of experience. It is the bliss of the lower Savikalpa Samadhi. This itself is an obstacle as long as it prevents you from enjoying the highest Nirvikalpa bliss. The Sadhaka who has experienced this supersensual bliss imagines that he has reached the final destination and gives up his Sadhana. Just as a man is not satisfied with the petty things he has found out just beneath the surface of the ground and goes on digging the earth very deep to find out the most precious hidden treasures and gems, so also the Sadhaka should not be satisfied with Rasasvada, but continue his Sadhana till he gets the unconditioned Bhuma, the highest goal of life. He should never be satisfied with Alpa or lower experiences. He should compare his experiences with the highest experiences of sages that are described in the Upanishads and find out whether they exactly tally with the latter or not. He should exert till he reaches the seventh Jnana Bhumika, till he becomes a Brahma Varishtha. He should struggle hard and continue Sadhana till he gets the inner feeling of "Apta Kama, Krita-Kritya, Prapta-Prapya", the feeling "I have obtained all desires, I have done everything, I know everything. There is nothing more to be known. There is nothing more to be obtained".

This obstacle, Rasasvada, prevents the Sadhaka from enjoying the highest Nirvikalpa bliss. Vichara, discrimination, prayer, Pranayama, further earnestness and struggle in meditation will remove the above obstacle.

Tushnimbhuta Avastha

Tushnimbhuta Avastha is a quiet state of the mind wherein there is neither attraction nor repulsion for objects for a short time. It occurs in the Jagrat state. It is a neutral state of the mind. It is an obstacle to meditation. It should be avoided. It is mistaken by ignorant Sadhakas for Samadhi.

The mind sometimes remains quiet for a short time. You will find neither Raga nor Dvesha in the mind. You should overcome this state of mind by careful introspection and vigorous meditation. A Sadhaka, through experience and acute acumen, can find out exactly the nature of the various states of the mind. He should adopt effective methods to control those states. Mere study of books will not help him much. Experience and practice will do him much real good.

Stabdha Avastha

Stabdha Avastha is another kind of mental state. It is stupefaction arising from fear or wonder. It is akin to Tushnim Avastha. This also is another obstacle in the path. When you experience some astounding news, the mind gets stunned for sometime. This is Stabdha Avastha. Tushnim and Stabdha Avasthas are Jada states. There is no perfect awareness. The mind remains like a log of wood in a state of inertia. It becomes unfit for active meditation. When these states prevail, there is heaviness of the body. The mind also becomes dull for the time being. There is lack of cheerfulness. The student can find out these states by these symptoms. An intelligent Sadhaka who practises meditation daily can easily find out the different states into which the mind passes. A beginner finds meditation dry in the beginning. But an advanced student who has an intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the nature of the mind and its operations and the laws of the mental plane will find meditation very interesting. The more he meditates, the more he gains control of the mind. He can understand the nature of the Vrittis and the different mental states. He can control them. He will actually feel that he is gaining inner spiritual strength and that he cannot be easily swayed by the mind now.

Some Mistaken Notions

A mixture of Tandri and Manorajya, drowsiness and reverie, is mistaken by aspirants for deep meditation and Samadhi. The mind appears to be established in concentration and free from distraction. This is a mistake. Closely watch the mind. Remove these two serious obstacles through Vichara, Pranayama and light Sattvic diet. Be thoughtful, careful and vigilant. Stand for ten minutes and dash cold water on the face and head if drowsiness comes in.

Sometimes cupidity will simulate a concentrated state. You are concentrated elsewhere, but not on the Lakshya. Watch this and withdraw the mind. Deep sleep state is mistaken by many for Samadhi. Samadhi is a positive, real state. It is all-knowledge. Do not make mistakes. During meditation, when the mind passes into a calm state of Samata, when you feel a peculiar concentration-Ananda, think you are entering into the Samadhi state. Do not disturb this state. Try your best to keep it for a long time. Mark this state very carefully.

Know things in their proper light. Do not be deluded. Emotion is mistaken for devotion; violent jumping in the air during Sankirtana for divine ecstasy; falling down in swoon on account of exhaustion from too much jumping for Bhava Samadhi; Rajasic restlessness and motion for divine activities and Karma Yoga; a Tamasic man for a Sattvic man; movement of air in rheumatism in the back for ascent of Kundalini; Tandri and deep sleep for Samadhi; Manorajya or building castles in the air for meditation; physical nudity for Jivanmukti state. Learn to discriminate and become wise.

Do not mistake Tandri for Savikalpa Samadhi and deep sleep for Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The glory of the state of Turiya or Bhuma is ineffable. Its splendour is indescribable.

Even if you do not feel any pulse in the Sadhaka when he is in meditation, even if the breathing stops, do not think that he is in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. He should return with supersensual divine knowledge. Then only it can be said that he has attained real Samadhi. The breathing and pulse may stop from various other causes also. If one abstains from food and drink and practises a little concentration or even if he sits in the Asana steadily for sometime, the breathing and pulse may stop. The Sadhaka must have perfect awareness in meditation. There is not much spiritual gain if he remains in a mere Jada state, even though he is insensible to external sounds.

Once two Sannyasins were deceived by another Sadhu who used to sit in meditation without pulse and breathing for several hours. Later on he turned out to be a hypocrite. He cheated them and ran away with some money. You will have to be very careful in your judgement.

During meditation do not allow yourself to pass into a Jada state. Do not mistake this state for merging in the Lord or communion. Remaining in a Jada state for some hours is not desirable. It is like deep sleep. This will not help you in your spiritual evolution. If this time is spent in doing Japa, Kirtan, Mantra-writing and study of sacred books, you will have quick evolution. Be on the alert. Watch vigilantly. If there is real merging or real deep meditation, you must have peace, bliss and divine knowledge. You must be free from doubts, fear, delusion, egoism, anger, passion and Raga-Dvesha. Some dull inexperienced aspirants mistake this Jada state for Nirvikalpa Samadhi. They get false contentment and stop their Sadhana

28

MEDITATION, WORK AND REST

A microscopic minority only are fit for whole-time meditation. People like Sadasiva Brahmendra and Sri Sankara only can spend the whole time in meditation. Many Sadhus who take to Nirvritti Marga become completely Tamasic. Tamas is mistaken for Sattva. This is a great blunder. One can evolve beautifully by doing Karma Yoga in the world if he knows how to spend his time profitably. A householder should seek the advice of Sannyasins and Mahatmas from time to time, draw a daily routine and adhere to it strictly amidst worldly activities. Rajas can be converted into Sattva. Intense Rajas takes a Sattvic turn. It is impossible to convert Tamas all of a sudden into Sattva. Tamas should be turned into Rajas first.

Young Sadhus who take to Nivritti Marga do not stick to a routine. They do not hear the words of elders. They do not obey the orders of the Guru. They want absolute independence from the very beginning. They lead a happy-go-lucky life. There is no one to check. They have their own ways. They do not know how to regulate the energy and how to chalk out a daily programme. They aimlessly wander about from place to place. They become Tamasic within six months. They sit for half an hour in some Asana and imagine that they are realised souls.

If an aspirant who has taken to the Nivritti Marga finds that he is not evolving, that he is not improving in meditation, and is going into a Tamasic state, he should at once take up some kind of service for some years and work vigorously. He should combine work along with meditation. This is wisdom. This is prudence. This is sagacity. Then he should go in for seclusion. One should use his common sense throughout his Sadhana. It is very difficult to come out of the Tamasic state. A Sadhaka should be very cautious. When Tamas tries to overtake him, he should immediately do some sort of brisk work. He can run in the open air, draw water from wells. He should drive off the Tamas by some intelligent means or the other.

Meditation and Work

He who meditates is not able to work. He who works is not able to meditate. This is not balance. This is not equanimity. The two principles meditation and action, must be well balanced. If you are ready to follow the divine injunction, you must be able to take up whatever work you are given—even a stupendous work—and leave it the next day, with the same quietness with which you took it up and without feeling that the responsibility is yours. You must be able to work hard in the world with tremendous force, and when the work is over you must be able to shut yourself up in a cave as an absolute recluse for a long time with great peace of mind. That is balance. That is real strength. Then only you have gone beyond the qualities. Then only you have become a Gunatita. "He, O Pandava, who hateth not radiance (Sattva) nor outgoing energy (work), nor even sloth and slumber (Moha) when present, nor longeth after them when absent—he is said to have crossed over the qualities." (Gita, XIV-22).

When you have a disinclination for work and a desire for meditation only, you can lead a life of complete seclusion, living on milk and fruits alone. You will have good spiritual progress. When there is an inclination for work, when the meditative mood vanishes, take up work again. Thus, by gradual practice, the mind should be moulded.

When you advance in the spiritual practice, it will be very difficult for you to do meditation and office work at the same time, because the mind will undergo a double strain. Those who practise meditation will find that they are more sensitive than the people who do not meditate and because of that, the strain on the physical body is enormous. The mind works in different grooves and channels with different Samskaras during meditation. It finds it very difficult to adjust to different kinds of uncongenial activities. As soon as it comes down from the meditation, it gropes in darkness. It gets bewildered and puzzled. The Prana or energy which moves inward in different grooves and channels and which is subtle during meditation has to move in new, different channels during worldly activities. It becomes very gross during work. When you sit again for meditation in the evening, you will have to struggle hard to wipe out the new Samskaras you have gathered during the course of the day and get calm and one-pointedness of mind. This struggle sometimes brings in headache.

Therefore, Grihastha Yogic students will have to stop all the worldly activities when they advance in meditation if they desire to progress further. They themselves will be forced to give up all work if they are really sincere. Work is a hindrance in meditation for advanced students. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "For a sage who is seeking Yoga, action is called the means; for the same sage who is enthroned in Yoga, who is in the state of Yogarudha, serenity or Sama is called the means". Then, work and meditation become incompatible like acid and alkali or fire and water or light and darkness.

Advanced aspirants should stop all sorts of work and study of religious books even, if they want to enter into Samadhi quickly. They should observe Mauna and remain in a solitary place on the banks of the Ganga, Yamuna or Narmada or any river. They should live on milk alone or milk and fruits. They should plunge themselves in Sadhana in right earnest. They should reduce the sleep to 2 or 3 hours. They should start the practice in the beginning of winter, in November. There is real rest in meditation. This rest for half an hour or one hour is far superior to the rest that is obtained from sleep and will suffice.

Meditation Gives Real Rest

Fatigue of the Indriyas demands rest. Hence, sleep supervenes at night rhythmically. Motion and rest are rhythmical processes in life. The mind moves about in the avenues of the senses through the force of the Vasanas. Strictly speaking, Dridha Sushupti or the deep sleep state is very, very rare. There is subtle working of the mind in sleep also. Hence you do not get good rest in sleep. Real rest is secured in meditation, and in meditation only. It is only Dhyana Yogins who practise meditation that can feel real rest in Asana. The mind is fully concentrated during meditation, is far away from objects, and nearer the Atman. There are no Raga-Dvesha currents during meditation owing to the absence of objects. Consequently, there is the manifestation of solid, lasting, real spiritual Ananda with complete, genuine rest. You must practise meditation. You must feel yourself. Then you will agree with me. In Varanasi, there is a Hatha Yogi who does levitation. He never sleeps at night. He sits on the Asana during the whole night. He gets the real rest from meditation. He has dispensed with sleep. You may not enjoy the rest fully in the beginning of your practice. Because, at the outset, there is a good deal of wrestling between the will and Svabhava, the old Samskaras and the new Samskaras, old habits and new habits, Purushartha and old conduct. The mind revolts. When the mind is thinned out; when you have reached the Tanumanasi stage, the third Jnana Bhumika, you will enjoy like anything. You will find 10,000 Bengal Rasagullas in the supreme rest in meditation. You can then cut short your sleep to 3 or 4 hours gradually.

29

THE APPEARANCE OF LIGHTS IN MEDITATION

Various kinds of light manifest during meditation owing to concentration. In the beginning, a bright white light, the size of a pin-point will appear in the forehead in Trikuti, the space between the two eyebrows which corresponds tentatively to the Ajna Chakra of the astral body. You will notice, when the eyes are closed, different coloured lights, white, yellow, red, smoky, blue, green, mixed lights, flashes like lightning, like fire, burning charcoal, fireflies, moon, sun, stars. These lights appear in the mental space, Chidakasa. These are all Tanmatric lights. Each Tanmatra has its own specific colour. Prithvi or earth Tanmatra has a yellow-coloured light; water Tanmatra has a white-coloured light; Agni or fire Tanmatra has a red-coloured light; wind Tanmatra has a smoky light; Akasa Tanmatra has a blue light. Yellow and white lights are very commonly seen. Red and blue lights are rarely noticeable. Frequently, there is a combination of white and yellow lights.

In the beginning, small balls of white light float about before the mind's eye. When you first observe this, be assured that the mind is becoming more steady and that you are progressing in concentration. After some months, the size of the light will increase and you will see a full blaze of white light, bigger than the sun. At first these lights are not steady. They come and disappear immediately. They flash out from above the forehead and from the sides. They cause peculiar sensations of extreme joy and happiness and there is an intense desire for a vision of these lights. When you have a systematic practice of two to three hours in the morning and two to three hours at night, these lights appear more frequently and remain steadily for a long time. The vision of the lights is a great encouragement in Sadhana. It impels you to stick to regular meditation. Also, it gives you strong faith in superphysical matters. The appearance of the light denotes that you are transcending the physical consciousness. You are in a semi-conscious state when the light appears. You are between two planes. You must not shake the body when these lights manifest. You must be perfectly steady in the Asana. You must breathe very, very slowly.

During meditation, the colour of the lights that you see varies according to the Tattva that flows through the nostrils. If there is Agni-tattva, you will see red-coloured lights. If Akasa-tattva flows, you will have blue-coloured lights. If Apas-tattva prevails, you will see white-coloured lights. If there is Prithvi-tattva, you will have yellow lights. If there is Vayu-tattva, you will see black colour. You can change the Tattva by various ways. But the best way is by thought. "As you think, so you also become." When the Agni-tattva flows, think intently of Apas-tattva. Apas-tattva will begin to flow soon.

Sometimes a big sun or moon or lightning-like flashes appear in front of the forehead during meditation. Do not mind these appearances. Shun them. This is not the goal. You will have to merge the mind in that which is the source of these lights and colours.

The seeing of lights in meditation equal to so many suns is not a big achievement in the spiritual line. You will have to ignore it even if it manifests incidentally. You will have to identify yourself with the Light of lights that imparts light to this light. That is Truth.

In the beginning of meditation and concentration, you will see in the centre of the forehead a resplendent, flashing light. This will last for half a minute or one minute and then disappear. The light will flash either from above or sideways. Sometimes a sun, 6 inches or 8 inches in diameter, with or without rays, will be seen. You will see the form of your Guru or Upasya Murthy also.

Sometimes, during meditation, you will get very powerful dazzling lights bigger than the sun. They are white. In the beginning, they come and fade away quickly. Later on they are steady, they become fixed for ten or fifteen minutes or half an hour according to the strength and degree of concentration. For those who concentrate on the Trikuti, the light appears in the forehead in the Trikuti, while for others who concentrate on the top of the head, Sahasrara Chakra, the light manifests on the top of the head. The light is so powerful and dazzling sometimes that you have to withdraw yourself from looking at it and break the meditation. You will find it difficult to gaze on this light. This dazzling light is the light emanating from the Sushumna in the heart. Some people are afraid and do not know what to do, how to proceed further. They come to me for instructions. I tell them that this is a new sensation which they have not hitherto experienced. By constant practice, the mind engaged in concentration will get used to it, and the fear will vanish. I ask them to go on with the practice.

As soon as you retire for sleep, these lights manifest by themselves without any exertion on your part. Just when you are going to transcend the physical consciousness, just when you are getting drowsy, these lights appear without your effort. Also in the morning, before you get up, in the transitional stage of half-sleep half-waking, you will get again these lights by themselves without attempt.

When you are lying down in your bed, sometimes a big light will pass along your forehead. As soon as you try to behold the light by meditating in the sitting posture, it may disappear. You may ask: "How is it that I fail to catch the light by exertion, whereas it comes by itself when I am lying down without an effort?". The reason is you lost the concentration as soon as you sat for meditation by the entry of Rajas with the idea, "I am doing".

The Divine Light comes not through open doors, but only through narrow slits. The aspirant sees the Divine Ray as a sunbeam passing through a bamboo curtain into a dark room. It is like a flash of lightning. This sudden illumination chokes all sounds of words. The aspirant is spell-bound in ecstasy and awe. He trembles with love and awe, just as Arjuna did when he had the Virat-Visvarupa-Darshana of Lord Krishna. So bright and glorious is the Light environing the Divine that the initiate is dazzled and bewildered.

When you get a flash of illumination, do not be frightened. It will be a new experience of immense joy. Do not turn back. Do not give up meditation. Do not stop there. You will have to advance still further. This is only a glimpse of truth. This is not the whole experience. This is not the highest realisation. This is only a new platform. Try to ascend further. Reach the Bhuma or the Infinite. Now alone you are proof against all temptations. You will drink deep the nectar of Immortality. This is the acme or final state. You can take eternal rest now. You need not meditate any further. This is the final goal.

30

VISIONS IN MEDITATION

Sometimes during meditation, you will see an infinite blue sky, ethereal space; you will see yourself in the blue space as a black dot. Your form will appear in the centre of the light sometimes. Sometimes you will notice highly vibratory, rotating particles in the light. You will see physical forms, human forms, children, women, adult males, Rishis with beards, Siddhas, and lustrous Tejomaya forms also. Visions are either subjective or objective, your own mental reactions or of realities on finer planes of matter. The universe consists of planes of matter of various grades of density. Rhythmical vibrations of Tanmatras in various degrees give rise to the formation of various planes. Each plane has its beings and things. Visions may be of these things or beings. They may be purely imaginary; they may be the crystallisation of your own intense thinking. You must discriminate in Yogic practice. Reason and common sense must be used all throughout.

You will see two kinds of forms—lustrous forms of Devatas and physical forms. You will see your Ishta Devata or tutelary deity, your guiding Devata, in handsome dress and with various valuable ornaments, flowers and garlands, with four hands and weapons. You will find a huge collection of Devatas and celestial ladies with various musical instruments in their hands. You will see beautiful flower gardens, fine palatial buildings, rivers, mountains, golden temples—sceneries so lovely and picturesque as cannot be adequately described.

The beings and objects with whom you are in touch during the early period of meditation belong to the astral world. They are similar to human beings minus a physical overcoat. They have desires, cravings, love, hatred, etc., just as human beings have. They have a fine body. They can move about freely. They have powers of materialisation, dematerialisation and multiplying, and clairvoyant vision of an inferior order. The lustrous forms are higher Devatas of the mental or higher planes who come down to give you Darshan and encourage you. Various Saktis manifest in lustrous forms. Adore them. Worship them. Do mental Puja as soon as they give you Darshan. Angels are beings of mental or higher planes. They also appear before your mind's eye.

Sometimes Devas, Rishis and Nitya Siddhas will appear in meditation. Receive them with honour. Bow to them. Get advice from them. They appear before you to help you and give you encouragement.

You will sometimes see a vast bright golden light. Within the light you will see your Ishta Devata in front. Sometimes you will see yourself within the light. You will see a golden-coloured light all around.

You may see your Ishta Devata as big as a mountain shining like the sun. You may see the figure during eating, drinking and working. When you enjoy the bliss of this vision, you will experience no taste for food while eating. You will simply swallow the food. You will hear continuous ringing of the Veena. You may see the blazing light of the sun.

The object of your meditation will come before you much quicker if you practise regular meditation. You will feel as if you are covered by the object on which you meditate. You will see as if the whole space is illumined. Sometimes you will experience the sound of ringing bells. You will feel the inner peace of the Soul.

You will see all sorts of beautiful colours. Sometimes you will behold a beautiful garden with charming scenery. Sometimes you will see saints and sages. Full-moon and crescent moon, sun and stars, will appear. You will see light on the wall.

There is a kind of vision one gets occasionally during meditation. You may behold a dazzling light with abrupt motion. You may behold a head of marvellous form, of the colour of a flame, red as fire and very awful to look at. It has three wings of marvellous length and breadth, white as a dazzling cloud. At times they would beat terribly and again would be still. The head never utters a word, but remains altogether still. Now and again, there is beating with its extended wings.

The experiences vary in different individuals. What one man experiences may not be experienced by another man. Many erroneously believe that they have realised the Self when they get these experiences, stop their Sadhana and try to move into society to preach and do Lokasangraha. This is a serious blunder. This is not realisation at all. These are simple encouragements from your Ishta Devata to convince you of a higher spiritual life and push you on to steady, systematic and incessant practice with zeal and enthusiasm. You will have to ignore these things and drive them away, just as you did with worldly objects. You must not care a bit when these visions appear and you must fix your attention on the Lakshya, the goal, the Brahman. These visions appear in some persons within a few days, while in others within six or nine months. It depends upon the state of mind and the degree of concentration.

When you get these experiences, when you behold these visions, you will feel a peculiar indescribable bliss. Do not get false contentment. Do not stop your Sadhana and meditation thinking that you have attained the highest realisation. Do not attach much importance to these visions. You have attained only the first degree of concentration. The highest goal or realisation is profound Silence or Supreme Peace wherein all thoughts cease and you become identical with the Supreme Self.

Don't waste your time in looking at these visions. This is only a curiosity. These are all encouragements to convince you of the existence of super-physical, metaphysical realities and the solid existence of Brahman. Drive away these pictures. Fix yourself on the goal, the Lakshya. Advance. Proceed seriously and energetically.

Rise above the visions. The visions that you see in meditation are a hindrance on the path to Samadhi or God-realisation. When you see them, the mind will be fixed on these visions throughout the day instead of on God. Avoid these visions and the thought of them. Be indifferent. Substitute the thought of the Lord.

Visions and experiences come and go. They are not in themselves the culminating point in the Sadhana. He who attaches much importance to these small visions does not march swiftly on the path. Therefore, abandon the idea of these experiences. The final experience, intuitional and direct, of the Supreme alone is the true one.

Jyotirmaya Darshan

When you advance in meditation, you can see your Ishta Devata in physical form. Lord Vishnu will give you Darshan with four hands; Lord Krishna will appear before you with flute in His hands; Rama with bow and arrow in His hands; Lord Siva with trident and Damaru.

Sometimes the Lord will come before you in the form of a beggar or a sick man with dirty rags. He may appear before you in the form of a coolie or a man of low caste. You must have the keen sense to detect Him. Your hair will stand on end when you meet Him.

He appears in your dreams. Lord Ganesha comes in the form of an elephant in dreams. Devi appears in the form of a girl in your dreams.

During deep meditation you will have Jyotirmaya Darshan. You will behold a huge pillar of light. You will see infinite light and you will merge yourself in it. You will be struck with awe and wonder.

Bad Spirits and Elementals

Sometimes bad spirits will trouble you. They may have ugly, fierce faces with long teeth. Drive them with your strong will. Give the word of command: "Get out". They will go away. They are vampires. They are elementals. They will not do any harm to the Sadhakas. Your courage will be tested here. If you are timid, you cannot march further. Draw power and courage from the Atman within, the inexhaustible Source, Avyaya. You will come across very good spirits also. They will help you a lot in your onward march.

Sometimes the elementals known as Bhuta-koti and Bhuta-ganas appear during meditation. They are strange figures, some with long teeth, some with big faces, some with big bellies, some with faces on the belly, some with faces on the head. They are inhabitants of the Bhuvar-loka. They are Bhutas. They are supposed to be the attendants of Lord Siva. They have terrifying forms. They do not cause any harm at all. They simply appear on the stage. They come to test your strength and courage. They can do nothing. They cannot stand before a pure, ethical aspirant. Repetition of a few Omkars will throw them at a distance. You must be fearless. A coward is absolutely unfit for the spiritual line. Develop courage by constantly feeling that you are the Atman. Deny, negate, the body idea that is inveterate. Practise, practise. Nididhyasana, Nididhyasana always, all the 24 hours. That is the secret. That is the key. That is the master-key to open the treasury of Sat-chit-ananda. That is the cornerstone of the edifice of Bliss. That is the pillar of the mansion of Ananda. Vinayakas are a type of elementals.

If you get glimpses of the Self during intense meditation, if you see a blazing light during meditation, and if you get spiritual visions of angels, archangels, Rishis, Munis, Devatas and any other extraordinary spiritual experience, do not fall back in terror. Do not mistake them for phantoms. Do not give up the Sadhana. Plod on. Persevere diligently. Break veil after veil.

March on boldly. Do not look back. Cross the intense void and darkness. Pierce the layer of Moha. Melt the subtle Ahankara now. The Svarupa will shine by itself. You will experience the Turiya, the Arudha state.

31

SEPARATING FROM THE BODY

A Yogi separates his astral body from the physical body, travels to different parts of the world as well as to higher planes in the twinkling of an eye, and returns to this physical body like a bird returning to its prison of a cage. A slender thread of Prana connects the physical and the astral bodies. The moment he gets out of the body, the Yogi sees with his astral vision his physical body as a cast-off slough. The process is a very simple one when you know the Yogic technique of separating yourself from the physical body.

This experience of separation from the body can be had only after a course of Sadhana for a long time and when the Sadhaka gets Chitta Suddhi or Nadi Suddhi. This is experienced during meditation in a sitting position when the mind gets the Ekagrata state.

Mind Moves

After a short practice of meditation, you will feel that the body gets lighter in a short time, say 15 or 30 minutes after you have taken your seat in Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asanas according to taste and temperament. You may be semi-conscious of the body and surroundings or may be quite unconscious of the body also. There is a great deal of happiness owing to concentration. This is happiness resulting from concentration, concentration-Ananda, which is quite distinct from sensual pleasure. You must be able to differentiate between these two pleasures through the Buddhi rendered subtle by constant Abhyasa, by constant meditation. Dharana and Dhyana have a power to sharpen the intellect. A trained Buddhi can comprehend subtle philosophical, abstruse problems beautifully well. A disciplined Buddhi that can carefully differentiate concentration-Ananda, Nididhyasana happiness, from sensual pleasure will naturally run daily to enjoy this new kind of happiness. Such a mind will loathe sensual pleasures. There will be extreme detesting abhorrence for objects, a positive aversion to objects. It is but natural, because Nididhyasana happiness is more lasting, sustained, self-contained and real as it emanates from the Atman. You can distinctly feel that the mind is moving, that it is leaving its seat in the brain, and that it is trying to go to its Yathasthana, its original seat. You know that it has left its old groove and is now passing in the new groove, in the new avenue. As a result of meditation, new channels are formed in the brain, new thought-currents are generated, new brain-cells are formed. There is a transformed psychology altogether. You have got a new brain, a new heart, new feelings, new sentiments, new emotions, new sensations.

Feeling of Separation

During the course of practice, one day you will feel that you have separated yourself from the body. You will have immense joy mixed with fear—joy in the possession of a new light, astral body; fear owing to the entry in a foreign, unknown plane. At the very outset, the new consciousness is very rudimentary in the new plane, just as in the case of a pup with newly opened eyes on the eighth or tenth day on the physical plane. You will only feel that you have a light airy body and will perceive a rotating, vibratory limited astral atmosphere with illumination of golden lights, objects, beings, etc. You may feel that you are rotating or floating in the air and consequently there is the fear of falling.

You will never fall; but the new experience of subtlety generates novel feelings and sensations in the beginning. How you leave the body remains unknown at the outset. You are suddenly startled when you have completely separated and when you enter into the new plane, sometimes with a blue-coloured sphere around, sometimes with partial illumination mixed with darkness, and at other times with extremely brilliant golden yellow diffused illumination. The new joy is inexpressible and indescribable in words. You will have to actually feel and experience yourself, have personal Anubhava yourself. You are unaware of how you left the body, but you are fully conscious of your returning. You gently reel as if you glide on a very, very smooth surface, as if you enter smoothly, gently, through a small hole or fine tube with an airy, light body. You have an airy, ethereal feeling. Just as air enters through the crevices of a window, you enter with the new astral body into the physical body.

I think I have expressed the idea lucidly. When you have returned, you can markedly differentiate the life in the gross and in the subtle planes. There is an intense craving to regain the new consciousness and to remain in that state always. You are not able to stay for a period longer than 3, 5 or 10 minutes in the new region. Further, in the beginning, you can hardly leave the body at will through simple willing. By chance, through efforts, you are able to separate from the body once in a month in the course of Sadhana. If you plod on with patience, perseverance and firmness, you will be able to leave the body at will and stay for a longer time in the new plane with the new subtle body. You are quite safe from identification with the body, you have made conquest of Deha Adhyasa, only if you can leave the body at will and only if you are able to stay in the new region for 2 or 3 hours. Your position is quite secure then and not otherwise.

Mauna or the vow of silence and solitude or living alone are *sine qua non* to achieve this end. If circumstances make it difficult for you to observe Mauna, strictly avoid long talk, big talk, tall talk, all unnecessary talks and all sorts of vain discussions and withdraw yourself from society as much as possible. Too much talk is simply wastage of energy. If this energy is conserved by Mauna, it will be transmuted into Ojas or spiritual energy which will help you in the Sadhana.

Thinking, concentration, effort to separate from the body and the Bhavana of your being the silent witness of the mental modifications should go hand in hand. A subtle intellect sharpened by meditation, strength and exertion is a triple essential factor in success. Patience of a strong type, Dhriti, perseverance, and Utsaha, a quality of the vital will, are absolutely indispensable for reaching the goal. These virtues should be cultivated slowly and steadily. Avoid unnecessary worry. Be not troubled. Be not anxious. Do not be idle. Do not waste time. Do not worry yourself if there is delay in further progress. Wait coolly. You are bound to succeed if you are sincere, if you have strong Mumukshutva, if you have strong Vairagya. A bird tried to empty the waters of the ocean with a blade of grass. It went on with redoubled energy in the act of emptying. Such must be the case with you with reference to strong patience and strong perseverance.

After continuous hard practice, you will be able to separate yourself from the body very frequently. There is now established a habit. As soon as you silence the thoughts and calm the mind, the mental habit of slipping from the physical body supervenes automatically. There is no difficulty now. The mind enters the new groove and appears on a new stage or platform.

Sometimes you will feel an invisible help, possibly from your Ishta Devata, when you are actually pushed from the physical body into the new plane. That invisible power assists in your separating from the body and going above body-consciousness. You will have to mark carefully all these operations.

You first separate yourself from the body, then you identify yourself with the mind, and then you function on the mental plane with the fine body just as you do on this earth plane. Through concentration you rise above body-consciousness; through meditation you rise above the mind; and finally through Samadhi you become one with Brahman. These are the three important Antaranga Sadhanas or internal means in the achievement of the final beatitude.

Astral Journey

You can simply, by mere willing, travel to any place you like with the astral body and there materialise by drawing the necessary materials either from Asmita or from the universal storehouse, the ocean of Tanmatras. This is astral travel, astral journey. The process is very, very simple to occultists and Yogis who know the rationale, the detailed technique, of the various operations, albeit it seems extraordinary to poor mundane creatures with diverse emotions, passions and attachments. Thought-reading and thought-transference also can be quite easily performed by those who can function with the astral body. Concentrated mental rays can penetrate opaque walls just as X-rays pass through bones.

Aspirants are eager to get spiritual experiences soon. They cry for inner spiritual experiences. They cry for the awakening of Kundalini and for Samadhi. When the experiences actually begin to manifest, they tremble with fear and stop their Sadhana. The Adhara or receptacle is not pure and strong to receive the divine light. When they are about to go above body-consciousness during deep meditation, they are terribly frightened. They open their eyes to find out whether they have their bodies or not. When the breath stops during deep meditation and when it tries to move towards Sahasrara, they are alarmed. They open their eyes to see whether the breath moves in the nostrils or not and then meditation is broken thereby.

Aspirants are awfully alarmed when they go above body-consciousness. They entertain a passing wonder whether they will come back again or not. Why should they be afraid at all? It does not matter much whether they return to body-consciousness or not. All our attempts are mainly directed towards getting over this body-consciousness. We are used to certain limitations. When these limitations suddenly drop away, we feel that there is no definite base left to stand upon. That is the reason why we are afraid when we go above body-consciousness. That is a novel experience. Courage is needed. Bravery is an indispensable requisite. Sruti says: *"Nayamatma Balahinena Labhyah.* This Atman can hardly be attained by weak (timid) persons". All sorts of forces have to be encountered on the way. A dacoit or an anarchist can easily realise God, because he is fearless. Only a push in the right direction is necessary for him. How Jagai and Madhai, rogues of the first water, became very good saints! They pelted stones at Nityananda, the disciple of Lord Gauranga. Nityananda won them over by pure divine love. Dacoit Ratnakar became Sage Valmiki.

32

WHAT HAPPENS IN MEDITATION

In meditation, new grooves are formed in the brain and the mind moves upwards in the new spiritual grooves. When the mind becomes steady in meditation, the eye-balls also become steady. A Yogi whose mind is calm will have a steady eye. There will be no winking at all. The eyes will be lustrous, red or pure white. When you enter into very deep, silent meditation, the breath will not come out of the nostrils. There may be occasional slow movement of the lungs and the abdomen.

Jerks in Meditation

Beginners will get jerks in meditation. Jerks of the head, feet, hands, arms, forearms and trunk may take place. Timid. persons are unnecessarily alarmed on this score. It is nothing. Meditation brings on changes in the cells of the brain, nerves, etc. Old cells are replaced by new vigorous cells. They are filled with Sattva. New grooves, new channels for Sattvic thought-currents, new avenues are formed in the brain and mind. The muscles are therefore agitated a bit. Be courageous and bold. Courage is an important virtue and qualification for aspirants. Cultivate this positive quality.

You may get jerks of hands, legs, the trunk and the whole body. Sometimes the jerk is very terrible. Do not be afraid. Do not be troubled. It is nothing. It can do nothing. It is due to sudden muscular contraction from new Pranic influence, new nerve stimuli. Remember that new nerve-currents are formed now owing to the purification of the Nadis resulting from Sadhana. The jerks pass off after sometime. The sudden jerks in meditation come especially when the Prana becomes slow and the outward vibrations make the mind come down from union with the Lord to the level of physical consciousness.

Sometimes there is tremor of the body during meditation. This is due to the Prana being taken up to the brain from the trunk, etc., in the process of meditation. Do not be afraid. Do not stop the meditation. You will have to pass through all these stages. When you get these experiences, you are improving, you are progressing. Plod on, persevere. Be cheerful. Help is from within, from the Antaryamin, from the Sakshin, from Kutastha-Pratyag-Atman. These are all new sensations.

The Entry of Rajas during Meditation

Rajas and Tamas try to obstruct meditation. The mind that was calm owing to the preponderance of Sattva during the course of meditation begins to tremble and quiver owing to the entry of Rajas in excess. Sankalpas or thoughts increase in number. Restlessness increases. Thoughts of action manifest. Planning and scheming come in. Take a little rest. Again do Japa. Pray and meditate. Take a little walk.

When the mind is Sattvic, you can get glimpses or flashes of intuition. You will compose poems. You will understand the significance of the Upanishads beautifully. But this stage will not last long in neophytes. Tamas and Rajas will try to enter the mental factory. In the beginning, the progress may be like the frog's, never steady and continuous. You may think that you have almost reached the goal, and experience for the next fifteen or twenty days nothing but disappointment. It will be a jump from position to position, but not a continuous development. Have sustained, intense Vairagya and do intense protracted Sadhana. Be under the direct guidance of your Guru for some years. Be in close contact with him. You will have steady and continuous progress.

When you experience bliss in meditation, some peculiar sensation will disturb you, and with this disturbance, the sublime bliss will disappear. During meditation Sattva increases, but Rajas is ever trying to overcome Sattva. You feel the peculiar sensation of disturbance on account of the entry of Rajas. The thought of any work that you will have to do may also cause a disturbing sensation. Forget all works and speak to the mind: "I have nothing more to do. I have done everything". When Sattva increases through enquiry, vigorous Sadhana and greater Vairagya, this disturbance will vanish and you will experience deep meditation. The bliss also will last for a long time.

Experiences in Meditation

Various persons get various spiritual experiences in meditation. There cannot be a common experience for all. It depends upon the temperament, mode of Sadhana, place of concentration and various other factors. Some hear melodious sounds in the ears. Some see lights. Some get Ananda, spiritual bliss. Some get both Prakasa and Ananda.

During meditation, you get rapture or ecstasy. It is of five kinds, viz., the lesser thrill, momentary rapture, flooding rapture, transporting rapture and all-pervading rapture. The lesser thrill is only able to raise the hair on the body like the goose-skin. The momentary rapture is like the productions of lightning, moment by moment. Like waves breaking on the sea-shore, the flooding rapture descends rapidly on the body and breaks. Transporting rapture is strong and lifts the body up to the extent of launching it into the air. When the all-pervading rapture arises, the whole body is completely surcharged, blown like a full-bladder.

During meditation you may experience that you are rising from your seat. Some experience that they fly in the air.

The feeling of rising up during meditation is a sign that indicates that you are going above body-consciousness. You will feel a peculiar Ananda or bliss also when you experience this feeling. In the beginning this feeling of rising up will last for a minute only. After a minute you will feel that you have come back to normal consciousness again.

When your meditation becomes deep, you will lose consciousness of the body. You will feel that there is no body. You will experience immense joy. There will be mental consciousness. Some lose sensation in the legs, then in the spinal column, back, the trunk and the hands. When sensation is lost in these parts, they feel that the head is suspended in the air. The mind may try to run into the body.

You will have no body consciousness. Even if there be body-consciousness, it will be in the form of a Samskara or a mental retention. A drunkard may not have the full consciousness that he has a cloth round his body. He may feel that something is loosely hanging from his body. Even so, you will have a feeling of the body. You will feel that something is sticking to you like a loose cloth or loose shoes.

You will enjoy a sort of higher type of indescribable peace during your meditation. But it will take a long time to get real spiritual experiences or merge the mind in your Lakshya or chosen object of meditation or get over body-consciousness completely. Be patient. Persevere. You will succeed.

During meditation, you will have no idea of time. You will have no idea of the environment. You will forget your name and all sorts of relationship with others. You will enjoy peace and bliss. Gradually you will rest in Samadhi.

In the beginning the aspirant remains in the state of bliss for sometime. He comes down. By constant practice of incessant meditation, he continues to remain in that exalted state for ever. Later on the body idea completely vanishes.

When you enter into deep meditation, you will forget the body and the surroundings. You will forget the external world first and then the body. All the Prana will be taken up to your head. You will have equanimity of mind. You will not hear any sound. There will be stoppage of up-going and down-going sensations. The consciousness of egoism also will gradually vanish. You will experience inexplicable joy and indescribable happiness. Gradually, reasoning and reflection also will cease.

When you enter the silence through deep meditation, the world outside and all your troubles will drop away. You will enjoy supreme peace. In this silence is the supreme Light of lights. In this silence is undecaying bliss. In this silence is real strength and joy.

When you meditate with open eyes, you may see a friend in front of you and hear his voice also; but you may not be able to make out the person and his voice because the mind is not attached to the ears or the eyes. If the mind is entirely withdrawn from the sensual objects, if the thoughts are annihilated, if likes and dislikes are destroyed, how can you perceive the world at all? You will become mindless. You will behold the Self only everywhere. All names and forms will vanish.

When you enter into deep meditation, the pulse beats may come to 30. The onlooker may not be able to perceive the breathing. The breath may not come out of the nostrils. In the Jada Samadhi of Hatha Yogins, the breathing and heart-beats will entirely stop. In lower Chaitanya Samadhi, the lungs and heart will be functioning very, very slowly.

When you practise rigorous meditation, Kevala Kumbhaka or natural retention of breath without inhalation and exhalation will come by itself. When Kevala Kumbhaka comes, you will enjoy immense peace and you will have one-pointed mind.

During meditation you will see small pin-points of light. These will begin to grow and will become as big as the sun if you continue your practice. You will behold luminous divine forms of Krishna, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Kaali, Ganesha, Rama and others. You will see beautiful scenes of gardens and buildings. When you repeat the Gayatri Mantra or any other Mantra, you will feel a spiritual current going to the anus region or Muladhara Chakra. Then the currents will go to the head also. You will feel great joy. Your heart will be filled with intense love. You will feel that a powerful spiritual current is going up along the spine during meditation.

You will feel that will-power is radiating from you. Your consciousness will be deeper now. Thoughts of God will start the spiritual currents in the body. Do not check these currents. If heat is produced in the head, apply butter, Amalaka oil or Brahmi oil. Take cold bath three times during summer. Take butter and sugar-candy.

Sometimes you will feel the presence of your Ishtam near you. The image will begin to appear as living when you practise regular meditation. While meditating with closed eyes on the image placed in your heart, you will find that the image is becoming more and more luminous. Even with open eyes, you will see a bright sun or moon. You will see lights of different colours.

You will hear the melodious sound of OM during meditation. You will see the form of your Guru.

You will experience a great upward pull on the anus and the lower end of the spine. Sometimes you will feel a great tingling sensation at the lower end of the spine. You will feel as though some great change in your system will happen soon.

In dream, you will feel that you are trying to come out of your body. You will feel great pressure at the end of the spine.

When you meditate with closed eyes, you will see in your body two luminous strings in which are placed luminous lotuses at intervals and the strings passed through the image of your Ishtam seated in one of these lotuses in the region of the heart.

Continue your meditation. You will feel that your anus and a spot in the top of the head are connected by these strings. You may feel that you will lose your physical consciousness. Be not afraid. Be bold and courageous. You will have rare spiritual experiences. You will have cosmic vision. Do not open your eyes now. You will come back to normal consciousness.

The attainment of cosmic consciousness is permanent in realised souls. It is like a glimpse in the beginning. Through steady meditation, it becomes permanent or natural.

Pure emotions will rise in your heart. You will begin to love every creature. You will feel that the world is nothing but pure consciousness. The tables, chairs, men, women and other things will all appear to contain this consciousness, just as vessels contain their contents. You will feel that all things are made of this consciousness. This rare experience will give you great bliss. You will feel that the Lord is sporting in all things as this pure consciousness. You will actually lose the sense of material nature of things around you.

You will have Sakara realisation and Bhava Samadhi at the Anahata Chakra. You will experience Nirvikalpa Samadhi at Sahasrara.

In Nididhyasana or profound and continued meditation, thinking ceases. There is only one idea of "Aham Brahmasmi". When this idea also is given up, Nirvikalpa Samadhi or Sahaja Advaita-Nishtha ensues. Just as salt melts in water, the Sattvic mind melts in silence in Brahman, its Adhishthana or substratum.

Signs that Indicate Your Progress in Meditation

These are the signs that indicate that you are growing in meditation and approaching God. You will have no attraction for the world. The sensual objects will no longer tempt you. You will become desireless, fearless, 'I'-less and 'mine'-less. Deha-adhyasa or attachment to the body will gradually dwindle. You will not entertain the ideas, "She is my wife", "He is my son", "This is my house". You will feel that all are manifestations of the Lord. You will behold God in every object.

The body and the mind will become light. You will always be cheerful and happy. The Name of the Lord will always be on your lips. The mind will be ever fixed on the lotus feet of the Lord. The mind will be ever producing the image of the Lord. It will be ever seeing the picture of the Lord. You will actually feel that Sattva or purity, light, bliss, knowledge and Prema are ever flowing from the Lord to you and filling up your heart.

You will have no attraction for sex. You will have no sex idea. Woman will appear to you as a manifestation of the Lord. Money and gold will appear to you as pieces of stone. You will have intense love for all creatures. You will be absolutely free from lust, greed, anger, jealousy, pride, delusion, etc. You will have peace of mind even when people insult you, beat you and persecute you. The reason why you are not perturbed is that you get immense strength from the Indweller or the Lord. Pain or pleasure, success or failure, honour or dishonour, respect or disrespect, gain or loss are alike to you.

You will converse with the Lord in the beginning. You will see Him in physical form. When your consciousness becomes cosmic, conversation will stop. You will enjoy the language of silence or the language of the heart. From Vaikhari or vocal speech you will pass on to Madhyama, Pasyanti and Para which are subtle forms of sound and eventually you will rest in the soundless Omkara or soundless Brahman.

Dispassion and discrimination, serenity, self-restraint, one-pointedness of mind, Ahimsa, Satyam, purity, forbearance, fortitude, patience, forgiveness, absence of anger, a spirit of service and sacrifice, and love for all will be your habitual qualities. You will be a cosmic friend and benefactor.

Contentment, an unruffled state of mind, cheerfulness, patience, decrease in the excretions, sweet voice, eagerness and steadiness in the practice of meditation, disgust for worldly prosperity or success, disgust for company, a desire to remain alone in a quiet room or in seclusion, a desire for association with Sadhus and Sannyasins, and Ekagrata or one-pointedness of mind are some of the signs which indicate that you are growing in purity, that you are prospering in the spiritual path.

If your general health is sound, if you are cheerful, happy and strong physically and mentally, if the mind is peaceful and unruffled, if you get Ananda in meditation, and if your will is growing strong, pure and irresistible, think that you are improving in meditation and everything is going on all right.

When you see the flower on a mango tree, you know pretty well that you will get mangoes quickly. Even so, if you have Santi in your mind, be sure that you will get good meditation and the fruit of Jnana quickly.

In dream also you will begin to exercise control gradually. You will check the mind when it does an evil act. The force of your Sadhana done in the wakeful state will come to your aid in the dream. This is a sign of your spiritual growth. Watch the dreams carefully.

What sort of dreams do you get? What sort of thoughts arise in your mind as soon as you wake up, when you are alone in the room, when you walk in the streets? Are you able to keep up the same state of mind you have during meditation in a closed room when you walk in the street also? Introspect and closely watch your mind. If the mind is perturbed when you walk in the streets, you are still weak. You have not advanced in meditation, you have not grown in spirituality. Continue the meditation vigorously. An advanced student will have thoughts of Brahman even in dream.

Why No Progress after Fifteen Years of Meditation?

Some practise meditation for a period of 15 years and yet they do not make any real progress at all. Why? This is due to lack of earnestness, Vairagya, keen longing for liberation and intense, constant Sadhana. There is always a complaint amongst the aspirants: "I am meditating for the last 12 years. I have not made any improvement. I have no realisation". Why is it so? What is the reason? They have not plunged themselves in deep meditation, into the innermost recesses of their heart. They have not properly assimilated the spiritual truths and saturated the mind with thoughts of God. They have not done regular systematic Sadhana. They have not disciplined the Indriyas perfectly. They have not collected all the outgoing rays of the mind. They have not made the self-determination, "I will realise this very second". They have not given the full 100% of the mind—their full mind—to God. They have not kept an unceasing flow of divine consciousness like the flow of oil.

You will find very often these terms in the Gita: 'Ananyacheta', 'Machchitta', 'Nityayukta', 'Manmana', 'Ekagramanah', 'Sarvabhava' . These terms connote that you will have to give your full mind, entire 100% mind, to God. Then only you will have Self-realisation. Even if one ray of the mind runs outside, it is impossible to attain God-consciousness.

Free yourself from the base thoughts of the mind, the various useless imaginations. Just as you render the turbid water pure by the addition of clearing nut *(strychnos potatorum)*, so also, you will have to make the turbid mind, filled with Vasanas and false Sankalpas, pure by Brahmachintana, thinking and reflecting on the Absolute. If the mind constantly dwells on sensual objects, the conception of the reality of the universe will surely increase. If the mind ceaselessly thinks of Atman or the Absolute, the world will appear like a dream. Make ceaseless enquiry of Atman. Mark the word 'ceaseless'. This is important. Then only there will be true illumination. Then only there will be dawn of spiritual knowledge. The Jnana-Surya, the Sun of Knowledge, will arise in the firmament of Chidakasa, Knowledge-space.

Just as the man who foolishly runs after two rabbits will not catch hold of any one of them, so also, a meditator who runs after two conflicting thoughts will not get success in any one of the two thoughts. If he has divine thoughts for ten minutes and then worldly thoughts for the next ten minutes, he will not succeed in getting at the divine consciousness. You must run after one rabbit only with vigour, strength and one-pointedness. You are sure to catch it. You must have only divine thoughts at all times. Then you are sure to realise God soon.

Every idea which exclusively occupies the mind is transferred into an actual physical or mental state. If you fill up your mind with the idea of God and God alone, you will enter into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi state quickly. Saturate the mind with thoughts of God.

Just as you saturate water with salt or sugar, you will have to saturate the mind with thoughts of God and Brahman, with divine glory, divine presence, with sublime soul-awakening spiritual thoughts. Then only you will be established in the divine consciousness always. Before saturating the mind with thoughts of Brahman, you will have to assimilate the divine idea first. Assimilation first and then saturation. Then comes realisation at once, without a moment's delay. Remember the triplet always: "Assimilation, Saturation, Realisation".

You will have to note very carefully whether you remain stationary in the spiritual path even after many years of spiritual practice or whether you are progressing. Sometimes you may go downwards also if you are not very vigilant and careful, if your Vairagya wanes and if you are slack in meditation. Reaction may set in.

You must not be too hasty also in longing for the fruits at once when you take to meditation. Haste makes waste. A young lady perambulated an Asvattha tree *(filious religiosa)* 108 times for getting an offspring and immediately touched her abdomen to see whether there was a child or not. It is simply foolish. She will have to wait for some months. Even so, if those who read works dealing with Atma-jnana and who do take delight therein will not be hasty in longing for the fruits at once, but will meditate regularly and gradually upon them, then the mind will, by degrees, be ripened, and in the end, the endless Atman will be reached and they will get Atma-sakshatkara, Self-realisation.

33

SIDDHIS

Yoga aims at controlling the mind. Miraculous Siddhis or powers are attained by the methodical exercise of the Yoga practice. A Yogi becomes the master of all forces in Nature and is able to utilise them at will. He has perfect control over the elements. Fire will not burn such a Yogi. Water will not drown him.

Late Trailinga Swami of Benares who lived in the last century and Sri Jnanadeva of Alandi, near Poona, had various Siddhis. Sri Jnanadeva made his house move to receive Changdeva who was coming on the back of a tiger. He made the Masjid walk. Trailinga Swami used to live for six months underneath the Ganga.

A Yogi can read a book even if his eyes are blindfolded with a towel. He can tie a big stone of 80 lbs. to his eye-lids. A Yogi can transfer his disease to a pillow or a window. Sri Sankara and Ramdas transferred their fever to a pillow. The pillow was shivering. Milarepa, the Tibetan Yogi, transferred his disease to a door. The door trembled. A Yogi can walk over water. He can remain unseen, can ever remain as a young man, can play with snakes, can tame wild tigers and elephants. He can shut up the mouths of bears and lions. He can give life to dead people. Tulasidas and Hastamalaka did this. He can pass from one body to another. Sri Sankara and Tirumular did this.

A Yogi can stop his heart and the pulsation of any artery at his will. He can bury himself for months underneath the earth. He can allow the body to be cut without allowing any drop of blood to come out. He can shed light by raising his hand. He can make a dumb man talk. He can give sight to a blind man. He can walk in the sky. He can multiply himself. He can bring instantaneous cure of many diseases. He can take any form he likes.

A disciple of Samarth Ramdas transmitted his spiritual power to the daughter of a dancing woman who was very passionate towards him. The disciple gazed at her. Her passion vanished. She became pious and religious-minded. Sakti Sanchar or transmission of power can be done by a Yogi through gazing, touch and Sankalpa.

Kabir's corpse turned into flowers, half of which were buried by the Hindus at Benares, while the other half were buried at Maghar. Sage Tiruvalluvar's body was converted into gold at the time of his death. The bodies of some saints in Southern India were converted into a mass of light at the time of their death. Saints can do anything they like.

Any Yogi, by practice, can have these Siddhis. Some Siddhis are passed from Guru to disciples. The Siddhis should not be demonstrated for material benefit or selfish interest. Siddhis are the greatest obstacles to Self-realisation. With a desire to possess some Siddhis and to amass wealth, worldly people run to the Himalayas and take Sannyasa. After a stay of some days, they go back. These Siddhis are not possible for ordinary people. You cannot expect to have Siddhis by simply shutting and opening the nostrils for 3 or 6 months.

A Serious Warning

The Siddhis are hindrances to realisation. They are stumbling blocks. They allure the Yogic students. Sadhakas should be very careful. They should shun these Siddhis ruthlessly as mere trifles or worthless things. The Yogi should not at all care for these Siddhis if he wants to advance further and get the highest realisation and the final goal. He who runs after Siddhis will become the biggest householder and worldly-minded man. Self-realisation only is the goal.

Siddhis cause positive hindrance to wisdom or the attainment of Self-realisation. They deter and obstruct the aspirant in his march towards the goal. They do not produce perfect non-attachment. That is the reason why Patanjali Rishi, the author of Raja Yoga, again and again says that the Yogic student should kill the desire for acquiring Siddhis. If he runs towards Siddhis, he will be caught in a big maze and it will be almost impossible for him to get out of the maze. He will misuse the powers and get a hopeless fall.

Whatever Siddhis and Riddhis you may get, don't deviate from your spiritual path and Lakshya. Do not think too much of psychic Siddhis. Treat them as poison, dung or straw. Clairvoyance and clairaudience are not worth having when far greater illumination and Peace are possible without the Siddhis than with them.

If you practise regular concentration, you are bound to get some psychic powers. You should not use these powers for base and selfish purposes, for some material gain or the other. You will face a downfall. You will be punished by nature. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Every wrong action is bound to cause reaction. It will rebound upon you and bring your own destruction. Do not prostitute the psychic powers. I seriously warn you. Beware. Power, woman, money and erudition act as powerful intoxicants. The possessor does not know what he is exactly doing. His intellect becomes turbid. His understanding gets clouded. You will not be tempted by these powers if you are established in the practice of Yama or self-restraint.

The Devatas put serious obstacles in the path of the aspirants. They tempt them. They tempt particularly the advanced students. Respect the Devatas, but reject the Siddhis or allurements ruthlessly. Then only you can march further in the path. If you yield to their temptations, if you become a slave of Siddhis, you will have a hopeless downfall. O aspirants, beware.

A desire for powers will act like puffs of air which may blow out the lamp of Yoga that is being carefully tended. Any slackness in feeding it due to carelessness or selfish desires for Siddhis will blow out the little spiritual light that the Yogi has kindled after so much struggle and will hurl the student down into the deep abyss of ignorance. He cannot rise up again to the original height which he ascended in the hill of Yoga. Temptations are simply waiting to overwhelm the unwary student. Temptations of the astral, mental and Gandharva worlds are more powerful than the earthly temptations.

Siddhis are definitely detrimental to the achievement of the final goal of life. One becomes fit for immortality only when he abandons the pleasures of this world and of the other worlds including those of Indra and Brahma. Siddhis tempt the Yogi to run into the sensual grooves. The motives attributed to the achievement of Siddhis may be pure in the beginning, but the suppressed desires will all on a sudden sprout up and delude the aspirant. Incessant prayer and strong belief in God are the remedies for all ills. Gradually you should develop dispassion for worldly objects including the body. Be cautious at all times.

If a Yogi is not careful, if a Yogi is not well-established in the preliminary practices of Yama-Niyama, he is unconsciously swept away from his ideal by temptation—Mara or Satan. He uses his powers for selfish ends and suffers a hopeless downfall. His intellect becomes blind, perverted and intoxicated. His understanding gets clouded. He becomes a black-magician or Yogic charlatan. He is no longer a divine Yogi. He is a black sheep within the fold of Yogis. He is a menace to the society at large.

Siddhis Don't Make a Saint

It is only the uncultured man who runs after Siddhis or powers. Siddhis have no spiritual value. Worldly people are enamoured of persons who exhibit Siddhis and run after them with curiosity. They are under the wrong impression that those who exhibit Siddhis are real Mahatmas or Jivanmuktas. This is wrong. Patanjali Maharshi also says: "The Siddhis are regarded as perfections by the undisciplined mind only, but are serious obstacles to spiritual meditation". (Yoga Sutras, III-37)

Exhibition of Siddhis is no criterion for measuring the height of one's spirituality. He who exhibits Siddhis for selfish ends is a big worldly man. He will soon have his downfall. Sometimes a Yogi may exhibit a miracle to his student just to convince him of the existence of supersensual things and to encourage him in the spiritual path. Queen Chudalai stood above the ground in the form of Kumbha Muni before her husband Shikhidvaja to create in him a strong faith in Yoga.

A man may have psychic powers and Siddhis through concentration of the mind. But, he may not have mental purity. Mental purity is of paramount importance for Self-realisation.

The Siddhis have no proper place in spiritual life. The presence of Siddhis never brings one nearer to God. The development of psychic faculties does not of itself imply any real spiritual growth. Siddhis are hindrances to spiritual progress. You will have to shun them ruthlessly even if they manifest during the course of Sadhana. They are bound to come. Siddhis and Riddhis roll under the feet of that Yogic student who has controlled the senses and who is practising concentration. They stand up with folded hands to obey the Yogic practitioner. But he should not mind them a bit. Then only he can advance in the spiritual path. Emancipation can be achieved only when you shun even omniscience and omnipotence as worthless. They are nothing when compared to the supreme imperishable wealth of Moksha or Kaivalya.

There is no such thing as miracle or Siddhi. An ordinary man is quite ignorant of higher spiritual things. He is sunk in oblivion. He is shut up from higher transcendental knowledge.

So he calls some extraordinary occurrences or events as miracles. To a Yogi who understands things in the light of Yoga, a miracle is nothing. Just as a man of the village is astonished when he sees an aeroplane or a talkie picture for the first time, so also, a man of the world is stunned when he witnesses an 'extraordinary' spectacle for the first time.

If you concentrate the mind at the tip of the nose, you will experience super-physical smell; if you concentrate at the tip of the tongue, you will experience super-sensual taste; at the centre of the tongue, super-physical touch; at the root of the tongue, super-physical sound; at the palate super-sensual colour. These super-sensual experiences will serve as a sort of encouragement and will strengthen your convictions about the truths of Yoga. They will goad you to do rigorous Yogic practices in order to achieve the highest realisation.

High spiritual experiences have nothing to do with colours or sounds. There should be inner joy, peace and poise. There should be balance of mind in success and failure, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. The pairs of opposites should be overcome. Raga-Dvesha should vanish. There should be cosmic love. The whole world should become the manifestation of the Supreme Lord. There should be freedom from all kinds of fears and pains. This is the real nature of high spiritual experiences.

34

SAMADHI

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi—concentration, meditation and superconsciousness—are the inner limbs of Ashtanga Yoga or Raja Yoga. They constitute the Antaranga Sadhana. They complete the psychic and mental discipline. They are stages in the mental effort of concentration. Meditation follows concentration and Samadhi follows meditation.

In concentration, the mind is simply fixed on the object. In meditation, the mind is filled with one idea of the object alone. All other thoughts are shut out. In Samadhi, the mind becomes one with the object of its concentration. The meditator and the meditated, the thinker and the thought, the subject and the object, become one. The worshipper and the worshipped, the experiencer and the experienced, become one. Unity, identity, homogeneity, oneness, sameness refer to Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

When the mind is completely absorbed in one object of meditation, it is termed Samadhi. The mind identifies itself with the object of meditation. In Samadhi, there is neither Dhyana nor Dhyata, neither meditation nor meditator. The meditator and the meditated become one or identical. The Triputi or triad of meditator,. meditation and the meditated vanishes. The mind loses its own consciousness and becomes identical with the object of meditation. The meditator has dissolved his personality in the sea of God, drowned and forgotten there till he becomes simply the instrument of God. When his mouth opens, it speaks God's words without effort or forethought through direct intuition, and when he raises his hand, God flows again through that to work a miracle.

In Samadhi, there is neither seeing nor hearing. There is neither physical nor mental consciousness. There is only spiritual consciousness. There is only Existence or Sat. That is your real Svarupa. When the water dries up in a pool, the reflection of the sun in the water also vanishes. When the mind melts in Brahman, when the mind-lake dries up, the reflected Chaitanya, Chidabhasa, also vanishes. The Jivatma or individual personality goes away. There remains Existence alone.

Turiya is the spiritual condition where there is no play of the mind where the mind, is dissolved in Brahman. It is the "fourth dimension" where there is infinite Brahmic bliss. It is not a condition of inertia, forgetfulness or annihilation. It is a state of absolute consciousness which baffles all attempts at description. It is the final goal of all. It is Mukti. It is Moksha.

Generally, when you have what you call dreamless sleep, it is one of two things; either you do not remember what you dreamt of or you fell into absolute unconsciousness which is almost death—a taste of death. But, there is the possibility of a sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immortality and peace in all parts of your being and your consciousness merges into Satchidananda. You can hardly call it sleep, for there is perfect 'awareness'. In that condition you can remain for a few minutes or hours or days; but these few minutes give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep. You cannot have it by chance. It requires a long training.

Samadhi is not a stone-like inert state as many people imagine. A life in the Spirit is not annihilation. When the Self is bound down to its empirical accidents, its activities are not fully exercised, and when the limitations of the empirical existence are transcended, the universal life is intensified and you have enrichment of self. You will have a rich inner life. You will have an expanded cosmic life and supra-cosmic life too.

Deep meditation leads to Samadhi or oneness with God. If you can fix the mind for ten seconds steadily on a particular object or Murthy, it is Dharana. Ten such Dharanas become Dhyana. Ten such Dhyanas form a Samadhi. The mind is filled with Atman or God. Mind loses its own consciousness and becomes identified with the object of meditation. Just as a toy made of salt melts in water, even so, the mind melts in Brahman in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. A sudden stroke of mystic illumination puts an end to all the empirical existence altogether and the very idea or remembrance of such a thing as this world or the narrow individuality of the spirit in this world absolutely leaves the self.

In trained Yogis, you cannot say where Pratyahara ends and Dharana begins; where Dharana ends and Dhyana begins; where Dhyana ends and Samadhi begins. The moment they sit on the Asana, all the processes occur simultaneously with electric or lightning speed and they enter Samadhi at their conscious will. In the neophytes, Pratyahara first takes place. Then Dharana begins. Then Dhyana slowly commences. Before Samadhi manifests, their mind, getting impatient and tired, drops down. Constant and intense Sadhana, with light but nutritious food, will bring about sanguine success in getting Samadhi.

In Samadhi the mind is stilled, the Chitta is silenced and the thoughts are controlled, and all surging, bubbling emotions are subdued. The Yogi passes into the transcendental calm or the stupendous ocean of silence and attains the transcendental knowledge of Brahman or the Eternal.

Samadhi or ecstasy is blissful union. The mind melts in the Eternal or Atman like salt in water or camphor in flame. It is a state of pure consciousness. The mind has always Vrittis or modifications. If the mind of man is freed from these through concentration and meditation, he becomes Brahman. *Manasovritti Sunyasya Brahmakara Taya Stitih.*

Samadhi is a means of liberation or freedom from births and deaths. It leads to the direct intuitive perception of the Truth or the Infinite. It puts an end to all the troubles of life and the causes of rebirth. It annihilates the impressions or Samskaras which give rise to fresh births. It helps one to tide over even Prarabdha, even though all the fruition of one's past Karma has not ended.

The knowledge gained through the senses in the relative world is not the highest knowledge. It cannot give you permanent satisfaction and everlasting felicity and peace. It is limited knowledge. There is always a sense of void in you in spite of your intellectual attainments of all sorts. There is an urge in your mind to attain transcendental knowledge, the Knowledge of the Eternal by which everything is known. *Yasmin Vijnate Sarvam Idam Vijnatam Bhavati.* This divine knowledge is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind. The senses and the mind cannot penetrate into the heart of the Ultimate Truth or the Infinite. They are finite instruments. The intellect and the mind have got their own limitations. They can operate only in the earth plane. It is through intuitive insight that you can attain this transcendental knowledge of the Absolute in Samadhi. It is only through Samadhi that you can know the Unknown, you can see the Unseen, you can get access into the Inaccessible.

Samadhi is union with the Lord. It is superconscious experience. It is Adhyatmic Anubhava.

Samadhi, Mukti, Turiya are synonymous terms. Samadhi means superconsciousness. The meditator in Samadhi is conscious of his own Self. Mukti is freedom from birth and death. Mukti is attainment of the Paramananda state or the state of Supreme bliss. Mukti is freedom from all sorts of pains. Turiya is the fourth state. It transcends the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep—Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti. To distinguish Turiya from the other three states, it is called the fourth state.

Moksha is loss of one's personality in the Divine. It is deliverance from the delusion of personality. There is no annihilation by the melting of this little false personality. Just as the river becomes the ocean itself, the individual soul becomes the mighty Supreme Soul with higher consciousness and transcendental bliss and knowledge.

The state of Samadhi is beyond description. There is no means or language to give expression to it. It is beyond the reach of mind and speech. Even in worldly experience, you cannot express the taste of an apple to one who has not tasted it or the nature of colour to a blind man. The state of Samadhi is all bliss, joy and peace. This much only can be said. One has to feel this himself. One has to experience this himself through constant meditation.

Nirvikalpa is the state of superconsciousness or Godhead. There is no Vikalpa or imagination of any sort in this condition. This is the goal of life. All the mental activities cease now. The functions of the intellect and the ten Indriyas cease entirely. The aspirant rests now in the Atman. There is no distinction between subject and object. The world and the pairs of opposites vanish absolutely. This is a state beyond all relativity. It is not a state of inertia. It is a condition of perfect awareness. The aspirant gets Knowledge of the Self, supreme peace, and infinite, indescribable bliss and joy. This state is indescribable. It has to be felt and experienced by the aspirant. The triad of knower, knowledge and knowable disappears. Man is Brahman now. There is no longer Jivahood. This is also called the Yogarudha state.

Try to enjoy that sleepless sleep wherein all the senses and the mind remain in a state of quietude and the intellect ceases functioning. This sleepless sleep is Maha Nidra or the superconscious state. It is perfect awareness wherein the individual soul has merged itself into the Supreme Soul. There is no waking from this sleep. The show of names and forms eventually vanishes.

In Samadhi or the superconscious state, the Yogic practitioner gets himself merged in the Lord. The senses, the mind and the intellect cease functioning. Just as the river joins the ocean, the individual soul mixes with the Supreme Soul. All limitations and differences disappear. The Yogi attains the highest knowledge and eternal bliss. This state is beyond description. You will have to realise this yourself.

When the mind is concentrated on Brahman, it becomes one with Brahman. Mind melts in Brahman. Mind becomes of the nature of Brahman. Then there is no duality. The meditator becomes Brahman. This is the state of Kaivalya.

Still the waves of the mind and hold it steady in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This needs constant and protracted practice of meditation. There may be breaks in the meditation in the beginning. But, practice can make you perfect. Later on you can remain absorbed in meditation. You can merge yourself in Samadhi with a mind steady like a flame protected from the wind.

Do not mistake a little concentration or one-pointedness of mind for Samadhi. Simply because you have risen a little above body-consciousness on account of a little concentration, do not think that you have attained Samadhi.

Samadhi is the highest goal which one can attain through meditation. It is not a thing that can be attained through a little practice. The mind should be perfectly purified. Then only the vessel or the mechanism will be fit to receive the descent of the Divine Light. It should be sufficiently strong to bear the pressure of a sudden expansion of consciousness or cosmic vision which is above mind and which covers the whole existence in one sweep of the new exalted, magnanimous experience. Therefore, wait patiently if there is delay in the descent of the Divine Light. Grow in purity and strength.

When you practise Samadhi, many obstacles such as sleep, laziness, break of continuity, confusion, temptation, infatuation, desire for worldly pleasure and a feeling of blankness will assail you. You must be on the alert. You must be vigilant and circumspective. You will have to get over these impediments step by step through patient dauntless efforts. You will have to cross the void also. What appears to you as a void when all the Vrittis have perished is not really a void. This is Avyaktam. If you cross this void also, you will rest in your own Self. Terrible fear will try to overpower you when you come face to face with the void, because you are left alone now. You have nothing to see and nothing to hear. There is none to cheer you. You will have to depend on yourself. Presence of mind is needed now at this critical juncture. Draw courage and strength from within. Sage Uddalaka also encountered much difficulty in crossing this void. No impediment can stand before a man of fiery determination and iron will.

You will have to pass through six stages of meditation and finally you will enter into perfect Nirvikalpa Samadhi or the superconscious state. Form perception and reflex perception will totally vanish. There is neither meditation nor the meditated now. The meditator and the meditated have become one. You will now attain the highest knowledge, eternal and supreme peace. This is the goal of life. This is the aim of existence. This is the final beatitude of life. You are an established sage or illumined Jivanmukta now. You are liberated while living. Hence, you are called a Jivanmukta. You are absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. You have become identical with Brahman. The bubble has become the ocean. The river has joined the ocean and has become the ocean. All differences and distinctions will totally vanish. You will now experience: "I am the Immortal Self. All indeed is Brahman. There is nothing but Brahman".

Try to continue the Akhanda Brahmic feeling. Soar high. Keep that state as long as you can. Get established in That. Have Sahaja Avastha or the natural Brahmic feeling always. This must be your aim and endeavour now.

35

SPIRITUAL VIBRATIONS AND AURA

Vibration means motion. The Lord willed and there was a vibration. The world was projected. The sound OM emanated. The three qualities—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—differentiated themselves from the unmanifested. There was a vibration in the ether and the other four elements came forth. Through the process of quintuplication or mixing up of the elements, the phenomenal world came into being.

The whole universe is full of molecular vibrations. Any word or Mantra uttered silently or forcibly produces molecular waves, gross, subtle or more subtle. These waves spread throughout the universe. It is said that the radio waves move round the world seven times a second.

Everything in this world, both visible and invisible, constantly vibrates. All particles of matter are in a state of vibration. From the tiniest atom to the mightiest planet, all things are in a state of vibration. The atoms of the human body are in constant vibration. Different rates of vibration balanced in the cosmic rhythm produce before us the magnanimous world. Matter is being acted upon by energy and innumerable forms are produced. Forms break down incessantly and new forms come into being. There is nothing in absolute rest in nature. The air is ever vibrating. Rivers are ever flowing. The earth is ever revolving. The stars are ever moving. Forms come and go, but the Reality that lies behind these forms is unchangeable.

The elements differ, not in substance, but only in the rate of vibration. The substance in ice, water, steam and vapour is the same. Each contains two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, but the rate of vibration differs in ice, water and steam.

Earthquakes, landslips, volcanic eruptions, thunder, lightning and so forth are the outcome of vibration. Electricity and magnetism are vibrations only. Music is vibration. If various kinds of musical instruments are kept in a room properly tuned, and if one instrument is kept in vibration, all the other instruments also will vibrate by themselves. Music produces harmonious vibrations in the mind and soothes the nerves and the mind.

Every thought, every word and every physical action produces in the atmosphere a molecular vibration which affects every object. Any evil thought, evil word or evil action immediately creates a bad vibration in the atmosphere and does harm to many persons. Conversely, any good thought, good word or good action immediately produces a good vibration and does good to many persons.

Telepathy is thought vibration. The mind is constantly vibrating. The mind is acted upon by the psychic Prana or subtle energy and various thought-forms are produced. Thought vibrates. The trained Yogi can send a thought in the ether to any distance he likes. Thoughts are separated from one another by different rates of vibration.

Importance of Harmony in Vibrations

There must be harmony or concord in vibration. Then there is peace. There must be rhythm in vibration. Then there is order. There is rhythm in the systolic and diastolic movements of the heart during contraction and dilation. So there is order or internal harmony in the circulation of blood. Man enjoys good health. There is rhythm in the vibration or the movement of the lungs. So man is hale and hearty. If there is a disturbance of the rhythm in the motion of either the heart or the lungs, then man gets incurable diseases of the heart and the lungs and passes away soon.

Some vibrations can be felt or detected by ordinary physical and sensory means. When you shake hands with another man, a distinct vibration can be felt passing from one hand to the other. A man who is both blind and deaf can easily know one individual from another, because no two persons have the same vibrations.

You will observe a definite rhythm in all vibrations. The law of rhythm operates in the working of this human machine. There is rhythm in every movement in this universe. Inhalation and exhalation, the systole and diastole of the heart, the ebb tide and the flood tide in the sea, the movements of the stars and the planets in the firmament, days and nights, seasons and monsoons—all follow definite rhythmic laws.

The five sheaths should vibrate harmoniously. Then only you will have good health and a sound mind. Disease is nothing but disharmony in the vibrations of the human body. Asanas, Pranayama, recitation of the Names of the Lord, singing hymns, prayer and study of philosophical books will produce harmonious vibrations in the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and blissful sheaths respectively. Then only you can practise meditation nicely.

Colours have vibrations. Some colours are soothing and pleasing, while others are very annoying and irritating. Green colour is very pleasing. Colours that irritate clash in vibrations with those of the receptive subject.

A Yogi practises rhythmic breathing to absorb Prana and develop will. His whole system vibrates harmoniously. There is perfect harmony in the vibrations of his mind. Through rhythmic breathing he transmits an increased current of Prana or nerve force to any part of the body for stimulating and invigorating it. He renovates and vivifies the whole system and heals any diseased part by supplying an increased quantity of Prana. He transmits powerful thoughts to others to heal them of their disease and attracts countless persons like a powerful magnet. He becomes a mighty centre of spiritual force.

Transmission of Spiritual Power

The Mahatma who meditates in a solitary cave in the Himalayas helps the world more through his spiritual vibrations than the Sadhu who preaches from the platform. Just as sound vibrations travel in the ethereal space, so also the spiritual vibrations of a meditator travel a long distance and bring peace and strength to thousands.

When the meditator becomes waveless or thought-free, he actually pervades and permeates every atom of the universe, purifies and elevates the whole world. Ordinary people can hardly grasp this point.

If an aspirant in Kashmir meditates upon his Guru or spiritual guide at Uttarkashi, Himalayas, a definite connection is established between him and the teacher. The Guru radiates power, peace, joy and bliss to the student in response to his thoughts. The student is bathed in the powerful current of magnetism. The stream of spiritual electricity flows steadily from the preceptor to his disciple, just as oil flows from one vessel to another. The student can imbibe or draw from his teacher in proportion to his degree of faith. Whenever the student sincerely meditates upon his teacher, the teacher also actually feels that a current of prayers or sublime thoughts proceeds from his student and touches his heart. He who has the inner astral sight can clearly visualise a thin line of bright light between the disciple and the teacher which is caused by the movement of the vibrations of Sattvic thoughts in the ocean of Chitta.

A spiritual teacher actually transmits his spiritual power to his disciple. A certain spiritual vibration of the Satguru is actually transferred to the mind of the disciple. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa actually transmitted his spiritual power to Swami Vivekananda. Lord Jesus did the same to his disciples. This is the Master's spiritual touch.

Why do places of pilgrimage attract people? Because saints, Mahatmas, Yogins and Sannyasins had done their Tapas and meditation in these places. In other words, these places have been saturated with pure vibrations. That is the reason why the pilgrims feel inexpressible joy, peace and strength in these places. The powerful spiritual thoughts of those spiritual giants are still floating in the atmosphere. They exercise a benign and soothing influence on the mind of the pilgrims.

Even some places in the plains have their own good vibrations. So, some people feel happy in some localities, but not in others. Happy surroundings with harmonious vibrations help a man to turn out good, substantial work, whereas unpleasant surroundings with morbid vibrations retard the work of a man.

You are Affected by the Vibrations of Others

Everything has a different rate of vibration. Various sorts of waves are passing about in this universe. Some waves oppose one another and bring about discord, disharmony and rupture. Some other waves move harmoniously side by side. Then there is peace and harmony. You must know how to harmonise your physical and mental vibrations with those without. Then only you can be really happy. If you can place yourself in tune with the vibrations of another man, you can really understand him. If you have immense liking for another man, it means your vibrations are in tune with the vibrations of that man. People of similar vibrations are united by friendship. If the vibrations of one man strike against those of another, they cannot be united. Hatred, prejudice, dislike and jealousy will result.

If you are not powerful to protect yourself, vicious thoughts of others will affect you when you live with them in the same room. Create a protective magnetic aura around you. Feel and imagine that a protective shell has been actually formed around your body. Practise Pranayama and meditation regularly. No wrong vibrations from without can affect you then. Your body and mind will be proof against undesirable vibrations.

If you have a pure mind, if you are free from prejudice, intolerance, dislike, hatred and greed, if you possess love, sympathy, mercy and an unbiased neutral state of consciousness, you will be able to find out at once what sort of vibrations people around you radiate. You will develop a new spiritual sense or Yogic faculty.

Do not be carried away by bubbling emotions. Bring them under your control. Use your reason. Keep a balance between reason and feeling. Develop both the head and the heart. Then only there will be harmonious vibrations inside. Regular meditation will pave a long way in the attainment of the balanced state.

Like attracts like. This is a great law. Entertain good thoughts. Do meditation. You will attract Sadhus, Yogis and Siddhas. You will be benefited by their vibrations. Your new spiritual vibrations will attract them.

If you live in the company of a developed saint, you will be benefited immensely by his wonderfully powerful spiritual vibrations and aura. Even a rank materialist and a confirmed atheist will feel the presence of God in his company.

The Aura—A Radiation of Life-force

Man draws his Prana from the air he breathes, from the food he eats and from the beverage he drinks. You can imbibe energy from the solar energy also if you know the Yogic technique. A deficiency of Prana induces weakness, low vitality, languor and inertia. A sufficient supply of Prana makes a man nimble, active and energetic. He has full life in every limb. He jumps and dances in joy.

The aura is, in fact, an emanation or radiation of life-force from the vehicles or sheaths of man. The aura can be seen only by the Yogi who has inner Yogic sight or clairvoyant vision. Each sheath radiates its own particular aura with a particular rate of vibration. So, there is no interference. The auras of the different sheaths interpenetrate one another.

The vital sheath is more subtle than the physical body. It overlaps the physical sheath and is more extensive than the latter. The mental sheath is more subtle than the vital sheath and more extensive.

You have to touch the body of another man to have a physical influence over him. Whereas, you can stand at a distance and by mere 'passes' you can impart your Prana to him, because Prana is more subtle than the body. You can influence a man mentally through thought even though he lives a thousand miles away from you, because mental force is more subtle than Prana.

The aura that emanates from the physical body is gross. This is known as the health aura. Its colour is faintly brilliant violet-grey or bluish-white mist. It is almost colourless. It is ovoid in shape. It extends from the body to a distance of two or three feet. The health aura is striated by countless fine lines which project from the body evenly like stiff bristles. In perfect health these lines are separate and parallel. They are there in an orderly manner. In poor health or in a diseased condition, they droop down like the soft hair of an animal or like the stems of faded flowers. The lines lie about in all directions in a state of confusion. When a sick person recovers from his illness, the radiation of the magnetic form of vital energy slowly begins and the lines of the health aura are brought back into order. They again become straight and parallel.

Just as blood flows along the arteries and the veins, so also, the vital force flows along the nerves in a constant stream. This vital force is poured upon us from the sun which is the source of life. He who has abundant vital force is a healthy man. He radiates abundant health aura and brings joy, strength, health and vitality to countless persons with whom he comes in contact. He becomes a centre of energy. The vital force constantly radiates from his body in all directions. A mesmerist actually transmits his vital force through magnetic 'passes' to the subject. It is through the help of this vital force that he practises various sorts of healing. He who is endowed with abundant health aura and vital force cannot succumb easily to any disease. The health aura and the vital force act as powerful germicides. They prevent the entry of germs into the body. Even if the man succumbs to any kind of disease, he will tide over the crisis very easily in a short time on account of his high standard of health and vitality. He will convalesce very quickly.

On the contrary, a weak man who is deficient in vital force or Prana absorbs the vitality or Prana of a strong man with whom he happens to come in contact. If you feel weak, uncomfortable and weary after an interview with any weak person, remember that the weak man has depleted your energy to some extent. He has acted the part of a vampire. You might have experienced this in your daily life.

It is quite possible by an effort of the will to put a check on the radiation of vitality from one's body by building a shell around the body. This will also prevent the entry of disease-causing germs into the body. Further, the body will also be impervious to any kind of astral or elemental influence from without. You may render yourself immune to any form of vampirism. There will not be any leakage of life-force from your body. The depressing influence of the base thoughts of low-minded people will be obviated. You can live quite comfortably with them in the same room.

This is the way to develop a protective auric shell. Sit at ease. Retain the breath for half a minute or one minute. Imagine that you are surrounded by a shell of thought aura to a distance of two or three feet from the body on all sides. Form a clear mental image. Repeat this process ten to fifteen times. Repeat OM mentally when you retain the breath.

The Spiritual Aura of Saints

Mind has got aura, mental aura or psychic aura. Aura is Tejas, brilliance or halo that emanates from the mind. The aura of those who have developed their mind is extremely effulgent. It can travel long distances and affect in a beneficial manner a large number of persons who come under its influence. The spiritual aura is more powerful than either the psychic or the Pranic aura.

The human aura has different colours in different people according to their growth and development physically, mentally, morally and spiritually; and each colour has got its own meaning and significance.

The spiritual aura is of yellow colour. It centres round the heads of saints, sages, Rishis, prophets and Yogins. This can sometimes be seen by ordinary persons with naked eyes when the saint stands on the pulpit to preach. The yellow glow is intensified when the intellectual faculties are put to an unusual strain. The face of the saint will present a glowing appearance. This is the nimbus or glory of a saint. This is the halo shown in pictures of spiritual leaders. The magnetic spiritual aura of Lord

Buddha extended to a distance of three miles all around. Those who came within the compass of three miles were subdued. They became his disciples. The magnetic divine aura of Yogi Kaka Bhushunda radiated to a distance of eight miles! The spiritual aura of even a first-class aspirant radiates to a distance of 400 yards. You also can develop this spiritual aura by regular and continued practice of meditation with zeal and persistence.

If the wick within the lamp is small, the light also will be small. If the wick is big, the light also will be powerful. Similarly, if the Jiva is pure, if he practises meditation, the manifestation or expression of the Self will be powerful. He will radiate a big light. If he is unregenerate and impure, he will be like burnt-up charcoal. The bigger the wick, the greater the light. Likewise, the purer the soul, the greater the expression.

If the magnet is powerful, it will influence the iron filings even when they are placed at a distance. Even so, if the Yogi is an advanced person, he will have a greater influence over the persons with whom he comes in contact. He can exert his influence on persons even when they live in distant places.

Dear friend! Surround yourself with harmonious vibrations within and without. Regular meditation will help you in attaining this end. Build through regular meditation a strong spiritual fortress and a magnetic aura around you which cannot be penetrated even by the mighty messengers of Maya or Satan. Carry with you, wherever you may go, vibrations of power, strength, joy, bliss, peace, kindness, love, mercy and sympathy. Absorb all good vibrations. Dispel all discordant vibrations. Learn to absorb the vibrations of great sages of yore which are floating in the ethereal space. Be in tune with the vibrations of the living liberated sages. They will all back you up. May the vibrations of peace and joy flow through your eyes, face, tongue, hands, feet and skin! May whoever comes in contact with you feel this! May the eternal, immortal Spirit guide you in your attainment of Self-realisation by developing harmonious vibrations!

TWENTY IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

By

H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

1. Get up at 4 a.m. daily. This is Brahmamuhurta which is extremely favourable for meditation on God.

2. **ASANA:** Sit on Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asana for Japa and meditation for half an hour, facing the east or the north. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Do Sirshasana and Sarvangasana for keeping up Brahmacharya and health. Take light physical exercises as walking, etc., regularly. Do twenty Pranayamas.

3. **JAPA:** Repeat any Mantra as pure Om or Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Sita Ram, Sri Ram, Hari Om, or Gayatri, according to your taste or inclination, from 108 to 21,600 times daily.

4. **DIETETIC DISCIPLINE:** Take Sattvic food, Suddha Ahara. Give up chillies, tamarind, garlic, onion, sour articles, oil, mustard, asafoetida. Observe moderation in diet (Mitahara). Do not overload the stomach. Give up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is sin. Give up salt and sugar for a month. You must be able to live on rice, Dhal and bread without any chutni. Do not ask for extra salt for Dhal and sugar for tea, coffee or milk.

5. Have a separate meditation-room under lock and key.

6. **CHARITY:** Do charity regularly, every month, or even daily according to your means, say six paisa per rupee.

7. **SVADHYAYA:** Study systematically the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama, Lalita-Sahasranama, Aditya Hridaya, the Upanishads or the Yoga Vasishtha, the Bible, the Zend Avesta, the Koran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib, etc., from half an hour to one hour daily and have Suddha Vichara.

8. **BRAHMACHARYA:** Preserve the vital force (Veerya) very, very carefully. Veerya is God in motion or manifestation—Vibhuti. Veerya is all power. Veerya is all money. Veerya is the essence of life, thought and intelligence.

9. **PRAYER SLOKAS:** Get by heart some prayer-Slokas, Stotras and repeat them as soon as you sit in the Asana before starting Japa or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly.

10. **SATSANGA:** Have Satsanga. Give up bad company, smoking, meat and alcoholic liquors entirely. Do not develop any evil habits.

11. **FAST ON EKADASI:** Fast on Ekadasi or live on milk and fruits only.

12. **JAPA MALA:** Have a Japa Mala (rosary) round your neck or in your pocket or underneath your pillow at night.

13. **MOUNA:** Observe Mouna (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily.

14. **SPEAK THE TRUTH:** Speak the truth at all cost. Speak a little. Speak sweetly.

15. Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Have plain living and high thinking.

16. **NEVER HURT ANYBODY:** Never hurt anybody *(Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah).* Control anger by love, Kshama (forgiveness) and Daya (compassion).

17. **DO NOT DEPEND UPON SERVANTS:** Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues.

18. **SELF-ANALYSIS:** Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day, just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep daily diary and self-correction register. Do not brood over past mistakes.

19. **FULFIL DUTIES:** Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your duties. Have pure conduct (Sadachara).

20. **SURRENDER TO GOD:** Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep. Surrender yourself completely to God (Saranagati).

Om Santih Santih Santih!

**This is the essence of all spiritual Sadhanas.
This will lead you to Moksha. All these Niyamas or
spiritual canons must be rigidly observed.
You must not give leniency to the mind.**

About This Book:

The goal of life is the attainment of final beatitude. This can be attained by meditation. The Ultimate Truth can be experienced by all persons by regular practice of meditation with a pure heart.

This book deals with how to develop concentration, what is meditation, prerequisites for meditation, favourable places for meditation, suitable diet, guidelines to successful meditation, practice of meditation, the most common obstacles in meditation and all such information which a seeker of Truth wants to know before starting the practice of meditation.

No more words. Enough of discussions and heated debates. Retire into a solitary room. Close your eyes. Have deep silent meditation. Dive deep into the innermost recesses of the heart. Drink the nectar of immortality.

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